

spare Rib

No 35/30p

P. 523/344

Bringing Up Kids in a Commune

An Exercise in Trust:
correspondence between
two women

Industrial Workers:
Fakenham Co-operative
Women against GEC

Abortion:
News from Europe

Common Market
Yes
or
No

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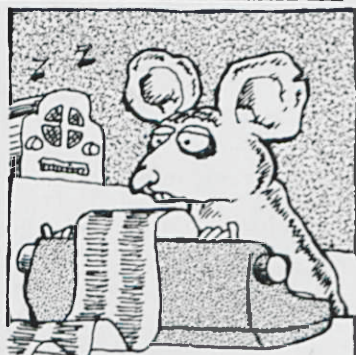
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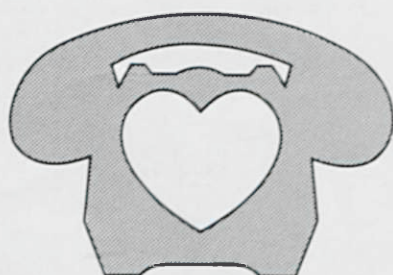
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Front cover:

Photograph of Polly, George and Billy at Laurieston Hall commune taken by Alice.

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LETTERS

Women's Liberation and Population Control

Dear *Spare Rib*,

While I would agree with Germaine Greer's analysis of the motives behind the imperialist states' campaign for population control in the third world countries (*Spare Rib* No. 33), I just cannot accept that we should reject out of hand all moves to limit population growth. Of course, as you say in your editorial, population is not the *cause* of the social ills of our society, but my own opinion is that a much increased future population is highly likely to aggravate these problems. I think we also have to remember that there are other forms of life on this planet, before we swarm over it utterly.

Ms Greer suggests that if, at any time in the future, the ruling class change their attitude to population growth, free abortion and contraception will be as far away as they ever were. But this would be equally true if abortion and contraception were made freely available through the demands of the women's movement, and if the social order changes, then hopefully this decision will not be in the hands of a ruling elite. This, then, is hardly a valid argument against population control. I feel it is irrelevant if some of the demands of the women's movement have been met for what we would regard as 'wrong' reasons; the fact remains that *some* progress has been made.

'We may have to struggle for the right to be pregnant, and pregnant as often as we want to be' says Ms Greer. I honestly do not believe that we have this right, any more than we have the right to kill or oppress others. If we wish to live with any form of social structure then we have to accept some limitations to our 'rights' in order to protect the freedom of others — and 'A women's right to choose' is no exception.

I think we have to be realistic. We shouldn't reject what has been achieved so far because the influence of the women's movement was only partly responsible. Rather we should concentrate on campaigning for freely available abortion. And, since widely accessible free contraception has

been thrust upon us, we should demand completely safe and effective contraceptives.

Yours sincerely,
Susan Startin
17 Oakley Avenue
London W5 3SA

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am deeply disturbed by Germaine Greer's article on population control, and I say this even while acknowledging the truth of some of her points — for example, that we get abortion or birthcontrol facilities only so long as the government thinks it is good for the country. However, she ignores a number of important aspects.

Most of us who believe, as individuals, in population control, or the encouragement of a falling population, do not believe that this is something for the third world alone. This is not a matter of rich white people wanting the numbers of poor black people to diminish, as far as I am concerned. Above all, Western Europe and the United States need to limit population growth — we are more greedy, more destructive and more wasteful than any of the so-called "underdeveloped" countries. Brighton's *Whole Earth* paper quotes the magazine *Resurgence* as calculating that, in terms of food consumption, 1,5000 Chinese can live off what 270 Americans eat — since the Chinese are largely vegetarian and the Americans are compulsive meat eaters, thus rear cattle on vast quantities of vegetable protein which could be fed direct to humans. It is a vast over simplification to claim that food shortages are merely a matter of politics and economics. Of course they are, and have been, to a certain extent, but we are now faced with diminishing grain reserves, and it is impossible to go on producing more food as available farming land shrinks. Although I would agree that it is no good reducing population if the present capitalist system goes on milking the earth dry and exploiting the poorer nations, I also believe that to blame the whole mess on governments is smug and stupid. How many people in this country are prepared to give up meat

over-eating in general, — stop riding round in cars, stop consuming useless goods because the advertisements tell them to? We are all responsible for the greed of the West and the exploitation of the third world — just listen to how people shriek about the dangers that our "standard of living" might fall, and how "socialists" grow stern about wickedness of rising meat prices. Basically, most people do not care about our over-consumption.

I am not claiming that a smaller population would automatically solve the problem of the greed of the US and Western Europe. What it would do is limit our ability to destroy our surroundings and exploit other countries. The *national* greed and destructiveness would diminish. Even on a local scale, wouldn't it be nice to see villages *not* absorbed into towns, or motorways *not* being built. Fewer people ought to mean a reorganisation of industry and agriculture, and if we moved towards self-sufficiency we could stop using up the resources of the rest of the world.

Look around at the destruction of the earth. It is not just a matter of capitalism and industry (though God knows these are bad enough) but a matter of too many people, in too many cities, existing on stolen food and borrowed time. Think of the fate of the animals exterminated or threatened by man's, and woman's, stupidity or greed, and of the fate of future generations of humans and animals alike. For the next generations maybe childbirth will be a luxury — maybe there will be too many diseased or starving women who are incapable of bearing or rearing children. What is so wonderful about the freedom to have a dozen children? Why is it so terrible for women to have to limit their affections to two children instead? Why is mother-right to come before all else in the world?

I refuse to believe that it is more oppressive for a government to limit a woman's fertility than it is for a husband and custom to oblige her to have many children. If a government's power can over-rule a husband's, and spare a woman years of

child-bearing, this is a victory. How many women really *want* all the children they produce in countries where children are symbols of male virility and future security? How many women who are "free" to have children now would dare limit their families without their husband's permission, unless they were supported in this stand by their country's government?

No doubt this letter is far too long, and full of too many arguments at once, but I cannot stand by and see population control dismissed as some kind of wicked capitalist plot without stating an alternative view.

Yours sincerely,
Gail Braybon
44 Cheltenham Place
Brighton BN1 4AB

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I never thought I'd catch Germaine Greer indulging in the very kind of woolly and separatist thinking which men specialise in. The fact that she does it in defence of women's rights doesn't make her logic less tortuous.

What "proof" does she need to understand that the finite resources of our planet cannot maintain an endlessly and rapidly growing population?

Her casual references to the unfair distribution of goods in this world won't do away with the imminent threat of widespread famine. And I could have done without her melodramatic and totally wrong statement about women being "systematically undeveloped by our conquistadorial society", whatever that means. Please don't let's work ourselves up into a semi-hysterical lather about every woman's right to have as many children as she wants; let's consider how we can best rear the children we already have, and make some provisions for our children's children — by ensuring, for instance, that there will be enough space, food, clean air and pure water for them.

Sisters, we can't have it both ways. We can't a) demand equality in decision making and expect our female experience and practical wisdom to carry weight in the outside world and, at the same time b) get emotional, nay hysterical, about our right to be Great Earth Mothers, giving birth every time our hormones prod us. Can we please agree on an intelligent middle way between dry ideology and over-emotional nonsense? Don't let's replace the lifeless intellectualisation of men



with the mindless politics of the womb.
Yours,
Beata Bishop
34 Esmond Road
London W4

Married Women on Supplementary Benefit

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Jo Richardson M.P. is to introduce a Bill in Parliament to end the Cohabitation Rule. Whilst being fully in agreement with the aims of this Bill, I feel that insufficient attention is paid to the position of married women in this context.

A married woman living with her husband is automatically not entitled to draw Supplementary Benefit in her own right. Her husband has to claim benefit for her whether he intends to support her or not. Besides denying married women the basic right to claim benefit which other sections of the community have, thus denying them any independence whilst living on Supplementary Benefit, this can of course lead to genuine hardship when a husband refuses to give his wife and children sufficient money and they have no other income on which to fall back.

Would it not be possible for this Bill to be extended to cover married women as well, so that all women can claim and receive benefit in exactly the same way whether married or single?

I cannot help feeling that this Bill, whilst a very important step forward, is, in its present form, seeking to eliminate one injustice whilst perpetuating another.

Yours sincerely,
Susan Jones
41 Station Road
London N3 2SH

The Abused Workers

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I felt I had to write a short warning to all women who have the urge to try their luck at the abuse secretarial work. The abuse suffered is tremendous.

The work does not only consist of typing etc, but making cups of tea, sewing buttons on jackets, booking holidays for the man's family, covering up for the boss' faults in general, and lastly, but certainly foremost looking your best at all times. In fact, in many cases the secretary is just a substitute 'wife', the only difference being the salary at the end of the month.

The amazement of the boss is obvious when the secretary mentions her interest in politics,

nuclear warfare, social and economic problems, as he feels she only possesses the intelligence to know the ingredients of the latest recipe. Bosses in general like to make their superiority known and treat most of their secretaries as second class citizens, which explains the lack of male secretaries.

So if you are supporters of the Women's Liberation Movement and feel strongly about women being treated as workers not slaves, and human beings not second class citizens, for God's sake *don't* be tempted to become a secretary.

Yours in sisterhood,
A discontented secretary
Warwickshire

Women and Psychiatry Workshop

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Many *Spare Rib* readers have written to us about our activities, and seem to have got the wrong impression of what we are doing, so we thought it would be a good idea to clarify the position.

The workshop has been going nearly a year, and was set up in London after a conference on Women and Psychiatry which followed from the Bristol National Women's Liberation Conference. It didn't start with specific objectives, or have particular preconceptions, apart from a general concern that a feminist perspective was lacking in the field of mental health. Rather it has been going through a kind of exploration of what members feel about the experiences of and attitudes towards women and psychiatry, and what we can do individually and collectively.

But we are also concerned with several specific projects, for which purpose we work in smaller groups between general meetings. One of these is organising a gathering of women who wrote to us about their experiences with the psychiatric establishment. This will probably be a day-long meeting in London during May. Much work has gone into devising a structure for the day that will be flexible and non-elitist, while covering most of the key areas of concern to the women attending, and providing for the exchange of information about resources for dealing with these situations. This may eventually be followed by a conference aimed specifically at us already involved in the women's movement, about how we view therapy.

Another group is working on the compilation of a handbook

intended to provide information about resources (and the lack of them), advise about these, possible alternatives, general rights, and so on. It will not of course, be exhaustive, nor is it suggested that we should be telling women what to do – just providing them with a wider perspective.

We are conscious of being very London-based which worries us particularly in compiling the handbook, and we are also aware that other groups which are starting (Brighton and Birmingham are the two we know of) feel very isolated, so we are attempting to start a Women and Psychiatry newsletter. After some discussion, we feel the first priority should be for a group or individuals attempting to start them, to exchange information as that is all we can cope with at the moment. When the newsletter is launched, we hope that other groups will produce it in rotation, so if you are a group that would like to participate, please get in touch, or send a small donation towards costs if you can manage it.

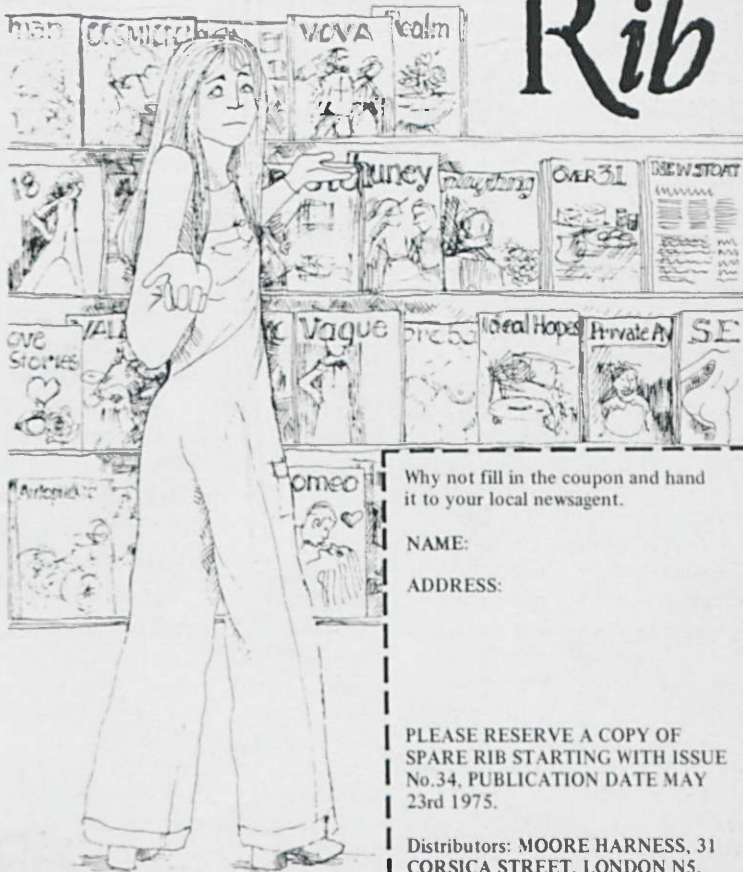
Early on, our group made the decision that we would not be directly involved with setting up

feminist alternatives to the system, eg local crisis centres, for various practical reasons. Individuals among us are very concerned that this should happen, and we hope that this will be one of the spin-offs from the work that we are engaged in.

So you can see that any woman who wants to come along could get involved in a specific project, and should have a forum for developing her own ideas about the relationship between women and psychiatry. Some women in the group are professionally expert, and some have become involved because of their personal experiences – psychiatric and/or feminist. Although we already have certain commitments, our future activities are very flexible and there should be opportunities in the group to work on any project that members of the workshop felt was a good idea.

In sisterhood,
Vicky Randall and Gail Chester
on behalf of the women and psychiatry workshop
c/o Vicky Randall
Polytechnic of Central London
Room 708, Elsley Court
20/2 Titchfield Street
London W1

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"Why is your magazine

Ann Scott answers more of the questions about *Spare Rib* that are most frequently asked.

You're always talking about political change — why? Why can't that be left to people in power?

We think that politics is not just about elections or what politicians do at Westminster. A *political* understanding of society is more comprehensive than a knowledge of the decisions that are taken by government. We think that politics must include an understanding of *how* and *in whose interests* an unequal social order is maintained. This kind of politics questions the basis for authoritarian relationships at work, in school, in the medical profession, in the legal system, and at home. But without collective action from below, these patterns in social relationships will not be challenged.

A political understanding of society requires an examination of our personal histories as well as observation of the constraints on others' lives. Awareness and discussion of everyday experience shows that there is a *general condition* of women, say — and gives insight into the relationship between different forms of oppression. How do people bring up their children and why are there tomboys but no tomgirls? Why are we graded at school and how are our sense of self and the course of our life affected by being a success or a failure? Why should industrial workers have to do overtime to make a living wage? Why should public transport be expensive as well as inefficient? How does rush hour travelling affect our physical health, our sexuality, and our resistance to depression? Why is it that thousands of us are silenced by medical expertise and apologise for feeling pain?

Defining the *personal as political* in this way enables us also to confront the social definition of *who* is political. Women are usually seen as apolitical. The rationale for this convention can be found in that view of human nature which sees women as *naturally* domestic, peaceable and comforting. Women are expected to be sheltered from the "harsh

reality of the outside world". Soothing the fevered brow is no cliché but a deeply-held view about women's service role.

Women have internalised this view of themselves and are accustomed to devaluing their experiences and belittling themselves. This self-effacement is not surprising in a sexist society. The phrase "No, I don't work. I'm just a housewife" is revealing because it connects the fact of women's inferior status with the experience of that subordination.

Self-effacement is also not surprising in a society which has separated political and economic decision-making from the mass of the people. This necessarily preserves alienation from seemingly monolithic but arbitrary governments, industrialists, Social Service departments etc, and a deference to authority which has roots in many generations of powerlessness. This resignation to a hierarchical social order reinforces people's lack of self-confidence as well as existing power relationships.

In women's liberation we are often asked whether we wouldn't be content with "more women at Westminster". More specifically we were expected to agree that Margaret Thatcher's election to the Tory leadership in February was "one up for women's lib". We may disagree, but this is not to say that we think events in Parliament are *irrelevant* to our lives. The current threat to the 1967 Abortion Act, and to women's right to choose whether or not they want to have a child, shows this clearly. But as feminists and as socialists we do not think liberation means the exercise of political or economic power by a handful of socially and educationally privileged women. We do not intend to delegate control of our lives, workplaces and communities to women instead of men.

You seem to assume that all women are dissatisfied with their condition. What about women who want to stay at home and look after their kids, or like having doors opened for them?

Women's liberation is sometimes caricatured as the demand that all women should be at work and all men at home with kids.

Women's liberation doesn't mean replacing one inflexible definition of the female role by another, but working towards a social system where women and men will have the chance to *make choices* about how to live their lives.

At the moment women don't have much choice. Schools still divide girls and boys into cooking and woodwork. 10% of girls at work get day release for further education compared to 40% of boys. 7% of girls are accepted for apprenticeships compared to 42% of boys — and three-quarters of that 7% are in hairdressing. Of girls getting two or more A levels only 40% go on to university whereas 70% of boys do.

What little day care there is exists only for women who can be classified as problem families i.e. social failures — unmarried mothers, or women who have been left by their husbands. Advertising pummels women into a competitive isolation as sex objects for men and as washerwomen for their children's shirts.

The figures for women on tranquillisers and sleeping pills — which far exceed those for men — show the strains inherent in the female role now. These are evoked by the Rolling Stones in *Mother's Little Helper*, a song about housebound women on pills. But their contempt for the distress of women trying to be efficiently feminine is explicit.

Women's liberation groups are confronting the restrictions of femininity by fighting for decent child care facilities. They are demanding *more* provision and a better *quality* of provision. Claimants Unions are fighting the Social Security cohabitation ruling which defines many unsupported mothers as men's dependents and withdraws their benefits. By showing how women are changing their lives, *Spare Rib* can help other women to gain the confidence to assert their needs.

so depressing?"

Bringing up kids in a commune doesn't automatically kill off the nuclear family but there can be - **a lot more messing at the edges**

A key issue raised by the women's liberation movement is that of the family. The traditional family unit has been questioned for the role it imposes on women, its values of consumerism and competitiveness, the relationships between parent and child and child and child, and the sexual stereotyping of children. Many of us reject this type of family in theory and some of us reject it in practice. The decision not to have kids is becoming more common. We tend to concentrate on our own freedom: contraception, abortion, sterilisation, day nurseries, creches, are matters crucial to our control of our lives.

The subject of childcare is one we have comparatively neglected. In doing so we have alienated some women outside the movement, particularly mothers. And yet it is today's kids who will make up the non-sexist socialist society we are working for.

In this and the following issues of the magazine we will look more closely at the subject of childcare. Here a group of women write about a radical break they have made with the traditional family structure, and the effects it has had on the children and their parents.

"The children are in the middle of a confused and sometimes demoralising struggle not only to live but to live the revolution. They get on with it better than the adults . . ."

Laurieston Hall is a grotesque Edwardian mansion, too big – 60 rooms – for the bit of decorative ground it squats on. Nearly three years ago it was bought and moved into by a group of people. Though we didn't know it, we hardly knew each other. The local environment, culture, economy and language even, were completely alien to us.

So, at about 8 a.m. 29 July 1972, we were thrown into a sudden and total dependence on each other: for stimulus, emotional support and the basic necessities of life, both baking the bread and earning it. For most of us the change was drastic; expected, but not understood – like having a first baby, when overnight you change from being somebody's child to being somebody's parent. Two adults and three children left within six weeks . . .

For two years now we've been a fairly stable living/working collective of ten adults and eight children, including all the kids' 'natural' parents. We aim (though we don't always hit) to share all domestic and maintaining work and child-care. Well yes, but see later.

All income and outcome is shared. For it, we garden and crop 2–3 acres, between us have one part-time professional job, keep animals, do building work, have groups of people to stay for various acceptable-to-us purposes (e.g. 50 women came to a Women's Liberation Week last summer), and groups of big kids from cities just to live for a short time (same kids coming back, not one-off trips). In a good week we get through at least three meetings: business; people/politics/everything else; and a women's meeting. The women also belong to a local Women's Liberation group.

The children we ought to be writing about are (in neat sibling pairs): Tam (2) and Tiffany (3), George (3) and Bill (7), Polly (5) and Sonya (7), Sophie (5) and Joel (6). Asked (however craftily), they don't have much to say about their lifestyle:



Polly and George jumping on an old tank.



Kate and George mending the electric fence.

Sophie (who's lived in a commune half her life):

"Is this a commune?"

"Yes."

"What's a commune?"

"Well, a lot of people living together."

"Oh, you mean like flats."

In fact though, we're mostly writing about Alice, Carol, Julia and Tina (28–33, all mothers) and Catriona (24) who's just joined us, and about the six men who with us make the commune. It's the women who have put this piece together – because we wanted to do something together as women – so it won't necessarily reflect the perceptions of any of the men.

Julia: "If we keep truckin' on at everything there will be a life for them with us..."

The lifestyle for us and the children isn't an objective we can or can't achieve. It's a process. What we do, how we do it, what we think is worked out, not in meetings, but through issues and incidents. It's a daily, often painful, collision between theory and practice. Hopefully, it's a dialectic – going somewhere.

It soon became clear that we shared very little consensus on anything below an abstract level. Come the barricades, when issues are large and plain, we'll be on the same side. But living and working, collectively and totally, every day throws up murky situations where ideals are jockeying for priority, and expediency threatens to beat them all.

It took us a week to realise that 'a commune' wasn't a panacea for anything, and about a year of trouble to begin to understand why.

Carol: "Tiffany was five months old when we came to Laurieston from a London commune, where she'd been the only young child. Tam was born here seven months later. For me, feelings of isolation with small babies are a result of their emotional and practical demands. Made more poignant here because nobody else then was having a similar experience. I was caught in innumerable double-bind situations: fitting in with structures that suited young children, but having the immediate demands of babies. Wanting to share

responsibility with other adults who'd had a bellyfull of babies. Being edged into nuclear caring for Tam and Tiff – and surrounded by moves towards the destruction of the nuclear family. Feeling the emotional and physical demands and shock of two babies close together, and feeling guilty at not pulling my weight on the communal front. Tam and Tiff seemed so tense and freaked out by the noise, confusion and all the different people. At mealtimes they just sank into themselves or screamed for attention. I felt guilty at the communal idea I'd laid on them."

It's hard to nurse a new baby and a new collective; maybe it's daft to attempt both at the same time. Hard to act a new role as mother when you're still busy defining that role. Hard, too, to feel support but not know where to express it...

You can think solidarity with women, feel empathy for a tense tired new mother. But why isn't the new father tired and tense in the same way? Why aren't the men expressing empathy? Well, half are away earning money; two are numb with cold under the broken-down car (a literal lifeline in the country). Why aren't the women working? Or fixing the car? Meanwhile the baby's screaming for a feed, a toddler was last seen heading for the lake, and a five-year-old is home from school, bewildered and frightened because no-one there understands her accent.

Nothing stops while we work out the ideology and the strategy. Those problems of the first year are sort of resolved now, but the issues are still showing in other problems. It would be so much easier to cut everything up: work/home, men/women, adults/kids, 'money-work'/political work, leader/led, to see your way clear in each segment.

We make things hard for ourselves living this way – and we don't even know if it's worth it yet.

Alice: "Childcare is not separate from any of the other living activities. The children are not separate from the problems we as adults find in relating and living with others."

We don't have any system of collective child-care we can point to and say how it's working; but we do have collective responsibility for the children.

Alice: "We came together as a living group and almost immediately communal childminding was talked about, experimented with and despaired over. Just as we spent evenings arguing over and realising differences on political directions, income earning projects, cooking and cleaning, so we realised our differences over child-raising. As time passes we get a glimpse of each other's visions. A consensus develops and people stray less and less from the general feeling – stopping yourself from actions you know are contrary to others' thinking, and expecting less that others ought to have the same visions as you. And all the time things are changing: the children's demands as they get older; women becoming more confident and involved in work not directly to do with the children; men more experienced in the joys and interruptions of children. Our actions are directly related to the changing situations."

Some of us felt strongly that neither children, nor childhood, nor child-care should be institutionalised in the form of rotas. Others felt that rotas were only an expression of commitment, guaranteeing parents big slices of free time. They felt that attitudes could be collectivised without institutionalisation. Looking back, that was pushing it a bit with eight unwilling kids between nought and five; and you can't be collective with half the people...

In any case some of our notions had holes in...

Tina: "I had a jolly picture of all the kids sleeping in one room. They didn't seem to want to, except now and then. Hardly surprising (I can see now) since the adults, especially the women, were making a lot of noise about having a room of their own. And I thought special relationships between children and parents might disappear. We could have decided to actively encourage that – to kill off (or more likely bury alive) the nuclear family. That would have been cruel as well as stupid – we weren't doing anything brutal to special relationships between adults, 'nuclear' or not."

But the biggest hole was the gap between things we believed and how we reacted when we attempted to live them. Once each of us had understood there *was* a gap, we could begin to try and bridge it. Ask direct questions like, "Why don't you ever take the kids to school?" instead of throwing moral stones: "I thought Kid-work had as much value as Money-work around here."

Whatever fancy ideas we might have tried, the kids weren't having any.

Tina: "It was awful. The kids fastened on to their families like iron filings to a magnet . . . That's my Dad's car . . . Our family doesn't do that . . . I love you and my Mummy and my sister and my Granny and my (string of distant relations) . . . The 'I love' game

went on a good 18 months. It was a nerve-wracking and soul-searching period for us, all that."

Julia: "We came in March 1973, Billy was nearly six, George nearly two, me 26½. I was full of ideas about how they would be involved in a creche and we would have set times to play with them and so on. Well it's not like that. They wanted their Mum and Dad, no messing. And that's what they still want, but with a lot more messing at the edges. Now they are friends with the other 17 people in and around the house." ▷



Early days of child minding . . . Patrick reading to the group.



Lesley and Bridget (soon to join us) digging for drains watched by Dave and Tam.

Now people — other than the children's own parents — daily comfort, play with, arbitrate, wash, bed-put, of course feed, and take kids to school, football matches, the dentist, whatever. Like the adults, the children have more special relationships with some people than others. Nothing's down on a rota though.

Sometimes around seven you see a lost adult wandering the house looking for someone to play or bath with. More and more the initial roles and situations get reversed, parents get excluded.

"Come on Sonya, bed-time" — traditionally an intimate time of day for this parent and child —

"Oh go away, Patrick's putting me to bed."

Sophie spends a lot of time in and out of hospital. Her mother or father always take her and stay with her, being ever so careful to make it a secure, one to one thing. Then she turns round in exasperation and says:

"Why do you always come with me? Why can't Paul or Alice, or some of the kids?"

They've all but evaporated any fears we may have had about 'laying a communal trip' on them.

We aren't used to looking at the Kids as a group, any more than we look at Adults as a group. It's hard to make any useful general observations, hard to imagine how they would have been if they'd stayed nuclear, and impossible (even if desirable) to compare them with other children.

All eight children honestly seem very happy and very busy most of the time. They also get angry and miserable. They don't often seem bored or irritable.

They've got an incredible list of privileges: a stable family of ten adults (OK, with a load of problems and a fragile income, but no landlord, no mortgage and each other to lean on rather than one other adult and the kids); safe space out the front door; each other; back-up nuclear families of grannies, cousins etc; middle-class parents; thirteen lavatories and a privvy; books; local friends; a two-teacher, 25-pupil village school; interesting/interested visitors; equal access to men and women . . . and it's not "meaningful struggle" all the time. They rarely encounter the alienation of a street, store, school, crowded with people who don't know them and don't want to know them.

But when they do meet those situations they seem to relish them, the older ones anyway. On trips away they act like the whole world was laid on for their pleasure. They accost strangers anywhere unselfconsciously, which sometimes disconcerts the stranger, like Sophie in the motorway cafe clasping a middle-aged male pinball player round the thigh at groin level — and she's big for five. They seem to think that everyone, child or adult, is going to want to talk to them. Mostly they do — and the kids don't get too upset if they're turned down.

The school-age children are just now meeting a lot of differences between school/Ladybird world and home, particularly to do with family and sex roles.

Catriona: "I expected that the children wouldn't feel a need to pair people off, but very early on Sophie asked me was I Mrs. or Miss and was surprised I didn't have a boyfriend."

Though she has slightly less orthodox aspirations for herself: she wants to be an 'acrobat-mummy'. "It's father can look after it while I'm at the circus and I'll help when I get home."

Two things probably help them square this disjunction in norms (which they would most likely have to face, commune or not). One is that very few of their school-mates have straight "Janet and John" home set-ups — there are one-parent, extended, and mixed together families. And in this rural community everyone knows about it and that "Janet and John" is a weird con. The other thing is the strength in numbers at home. There are a lot of reasonable people there who subscribe to odd values and forever argue about them.

"Is it true fathers mostly drive and mothers mostly cook?" Joel asked. They are having to work at it — but don't seem neurotic about it. We found this on a piece of paper lying around about a year ago:

"Kids Meeting at 4 o'clock on Wednesday

THE THREE BIG ONES

Cooking

Billy cooking on Dick and Julyer's day

Sonya cooking on Paul and Alice's day

Joel cooking on Tina and Mike's day

(all 'natural' parents but we don't do the cooking, or much else like that)

School

Billy off on Monday

Sonya off on Wednesday

Joel off on Friday

Belt

When you get the belt you go home to your mummy

Sums

If I get my sums all right tomorrow I will be good

Mummy

If Mummy sleeps with Dick I will put something on the door."

We haven't set out to be a Which Best Buy in lifestyles, nor to draw conclusions (nothing's concluded); only impressions:

Carol: "I longed simply to get into the mum bit, for a cosy, rural nuclear place. I was saved from that by the skin of my teeth, by there being a cottage in the grounds where Dave and I can make a place that's easy to care for babies in, still work communally and be with other adults and children. We've been there a year now. Tam's two, easy-going, resilient. Tiffy's three, highly strung and clinging. But both much happier. I can draw no conclusions about those first months in the house. They might have been tense babies and happy toddlers in any situation. I just remember it as a time fraught with tension, anxiety and guilt when I could least cope with it. I demand another freedom for women: the freedom for a new mother just to look after herself and her baby for the first six months, if that's what she wants.

"I'd never do it that way again — oh, I don't know!"

Alice: "The older children are together most of their waking hours. Sometimes the pressure of work means they have to be taken to school and put to bed as a group effort. Effectively communal child-care may be operating for days at a time.

"But mostly it is not organised and visitors who can't see a rota can't see that there is communal awareness of the children. But we question and criticise within the group, observe and are sensitive to



Going in search of a Christmas tree while exercising the goats (Jill and Heidi).

the children's ways and relate as closely as we can to local people. How we organise child-care will reflect all these complexities in a way that a rigid rota would not.

"I assume that the kids like most adults, find life difficult at times. There may be little security for them when they are exposed to the rawness of adult conflict and depression, feeling inconsistency within the group, and an awareness that most other children live in nuclear families. This is balanced by one to one adult attention (not necessarily parental) which can always be depended upon.

"The adults find life difficult too: re-thinking roles like breadwinner, mother, nuclear couple, and concepts like support and autonomy. This is balanced by one to one relationships within the living group, and for the women, a women's group that can be called upon and depended upon."

Tina: "I'm a bit bothered, thinking about it, that I don't know my children the way a 'normal' mother would — we're together alone much less than you normally would be with kids this age (even if you were out at work all day), their choice, not mine. Hm. It's alright though. I love them a lot, they're loving and give me lots of pleasure. They rarely irritate me. I feel I've got very little invested in them any more — not like my mother had, and still has, in me. The relationship is comparatively effortless. Before, it was built up of one-way acts of service, cooking, cleaning, transporting, amusing. In return, I couldn't help expecting something, gratitude? — at least that they be content. It was a system of obligations. Now the relationship is built of talking, playing, messing about together. It's a voluntary, spontaneous system. Though they're older too, it has everything to do with living communally. We're not thrown together, we come together. It feels lovely."

Julia: "But they also suffer from not being included — they are cooked for, cleaned for, garden dug for, toys made for. They don't want to cook when the adults want them to cook, the adults don't want them to cook when they want to cook, they don't want to clean up. With so many children, so many adults, we could become inflexibly 'Kids' and 'Grown'. But we should become more flexible. Well the grown have got to grow somehow." □



Sonya, Joel and Billy.

Is Weinstock a Male Chauvinist Pg

Women workers for General Electric Company face a multinational combine to avoid equal pay. Yet, in spite of the many pressures against them, women previously unorganised, many are learning their own strength for the first time



GEC electrical workers picket the Department of Environment to put their view on equal pay.

There are many difficulties in the way of women workers. Women's wages are unequal to men's wages. Women's work at home is a double burden. Most women still have the second shift of housework and the responsibilities for the care and maintenance of the children. These tasks make it hard for women to be active in trade unions. Male domination in trade unions delays a recognition of why this is so and can encourage the assumptions that women are apathetic for not being able to do more.

In the general struggle against GEC redundancies by men and women workers, women have these particular problems. For them, there is the struggle for the right to work combined with the struggle for equal

pay, against a harsh and powerful employer and surrounded by the prejudice against women. In their efforts women are presented with trade unions predominantly organised by men, and the bureaucracy stifling some of them. There are thoughts to struggle against that women are ineffectual and inferior as a sex, that they deserve low pay, that they might replace men at work. And women are faced with their own exhaustion because of the extra work they have to do as wives and mothers.

The only employment figures which have gone up in the UK are those for married women working part time hours with children. More and more women are in the situation to confront these problems. And

more and more women are joining trade unions. Over the last few years they have been joining trade unions at a faster rate than men. Things are changing and women are responding, especially when a union is serious about recognising their situation.

The Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff (APEX) is not a union famous for its militancy. The Assistant General Secretary of APEX said, however, that the women's strike for equal pay in May 1972 at the GEC Salford Electrical Instruments factory was the first major equal pay strike and set off a "spate of disputes and strikes as long as your arm". The new recruitment numbers into APEX in 1973 were, not counting juniors, 63% women and

which is determined
are resisting. Often
by Marsha Rowe



31% men, and expected to be in the same proportion when the figures come out for 1974.

Women workers are traditionally weak and vulnerable.

GEC, Osram, South London

At Erith, South London, the shop steward Nancy Gallagher brought out how responsibilities crowd out women's lives, "Normally we can't have meetings at the factory and the women find it difficult to get to branch meetings as they are nearly all married and have to pay people to look after their kids." This place is a GEC Osram plant where they make electric light bulbs. The factory is unionised but there hadn't been

trouble and no one remembered a strike there for at least 20 years.

But in 1972 was the engineering workers national wage claim. One of the demands was for equal pay and, although it was the first demand to be dropped, it was also the first public commitment to women workers. When the Osram workers decided they should claim for £2 increase for the women, and also for the labourers, the top rate for women was 41 pence an hour and for the labourers it was 50 pence an hour. The management locked the workers out. The workers, in turn, went on strike in July, until they went back with an increase of £1.50 for the labourers and the women. The continual need for the women and the men to unite as a class is brought out in resistance against GEC's attempt to keep its costs so nailed down. Yet this was also one of the first GEC hostile actions directly against women and one which brings out women's vulnerability as a group within the working class. The women workers did not receive any money towards the narrowing of the difference between their wages and those of the men.

Women face both redundancies and equal pay struggles against the GEC combine.

After renewed pressure for an Equal Pay Act that works, we are now landed with an Act which makes things more complicated. There are many scrambles in it, and the job evaluation scheme is so haphazard that employers can swivel on its terms to define women's work as less important, and therefore less valuable. Descriptions of jobs done by women can be put on the books to sign, seal and deliver discrimination against them. Unless the implications of the techniques of job evaluation are understood the Act invites employers to manipulate the terms to their own advantage.

When this legislation was being proposed as a Bill, APEX, the clerical workers union, publicised a document being circulated by the Engineering Employers' Union, which includes GEC. The document set out the EEU fears against the very idea of equal pay for women, advising employers to replace women by machinery, separate men and women so their work could not be compared and generally avoid raising women's wages even to the minimum level of that laid down for men.

Women's vulnerability is similar to that of other groups of workers, young workers, unskilled and immigrant workers. Against their experience, GEC is inclined to use force rather than the sophisticated cooption of organised union strength demonstrated by Scamp. Sir Jack Scamp is the Personnel Manager for GEC. He has a public image as a good negotiator which relies on his slickness in controlling people. When GEC set up a National Consultative Council

with the unions over the first redundancies, his comment was, "In the last analysis the unions had very little to say in the matter." And this Council does not seem to have questioned Weinstock's argument that the first redundancies were necessary, for instance the loss of 5,500 jobs in 1968 for people living in Woolwich, or GEC would collapse and could not secure anyone's jobs.

Yet the first successful fight against GEC redundancies was a smallscale strike at Higher Openshaw, Manchester, in 1972 where the workers were backed into militancy by the GEC cut throat tactics against apprentices. The inequality of women is part of the more general inequality and differentiation within the working class, and the response of these unorganised workers taking industrial action for the first time against the GEC combine is paralleled by some women's responses. Another wage claim at Openshaw highlighted the inequality of women.

Position of a factory within GEC scheme gives workers a particular strength and links men and women workers.

GEC, Higher Openshaw, Manchester Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, Technical and Supervisory Section

In the early 70s TASS, the Engineers' Technical and Administrative Section, began to extend their definition for workers who could belong to the union. Within this, they put in a wage claim for six technical clerks at Higher Openshaw to receive the same pay as draughtsmen. They had to take a series of actions short of striking and then GEC agreed to the increase. But, having thereby gained some bargaining experience, the workers lost their patience and there was a spontaneous walk out because the five men received £3 and the one woman technical clerk received £1.50, only half the men's increase.

Actions like this perhaps connect workers who have been separated, the white collar men supported the woman. Also, in the same factory, six women cleaners nearly succumbed to the GEC attempt to deceive them over what re-grading was all about. Without the intervention of the men shop stewards they might have accepted that their work was equal to the men's grading of "sweeper-ups" instead of the more highly paid grading of "labourers" and they would have lost £2 a week in wages under management deliberate distortion of the equal pay terms.

The position of a factory within the GEC manufacturing scheme may affect the bargaining power of the workers. The work of one factory is often duplicated by another plant, so then GEC can hold out more comfortably against the workers' resistance ▶

Peter Harrap, Report.



But at Openshaw they produce transformers, distribution switch gear, which is a specialist product, and GEC cannot obtain supplies for its production lines from elsewhere without bother. When the workers threaten industrial action, as they did in support of the women cleaners, GEC is more likely to be concerned about work being held up and so agree to the demands. This is why the women workers have since won 95% towards equal pay this year at Openshaw, whereas other factories in the area have only 90% until it becomes 100% next year.

Women realise their work gives them a special bargaining power within a factory and links women manual workers.

GEC, British Domestic Appliances, Peterborough

Transport and General Workers Union

When the Tory government announced that the male female differential should be reduced by a third in 1972, some women at GEC British Domestic Appliances, Peterborough were amongst the first GEC women workers to arrange an agreement, worth about £3. T&GWU Convenor, Margaret Robinson, described the situation, "About a third of the workforce here is women: our chief bargaining strength lies in the fact that a stoppage on our assembly lines can lay off the whole factory."³ The women realised they held a special bargaining power within the factory. They had also been employed on the same job as men. They were conscious of the value of their work and they were aware of their rights in equal pay claims.

The women at Peterborough would not let GEC get away with employing female labour on the cheap. When the factory was short of labour, management advertised the men's jobs, offering the vacancies to women for less pay. When the women protested, GEC came up with offers of equal pay, but tied the offer to a demand for new time tests on a productivity scheme which would effectively lower the earnings again. Eventually GEC had to agree, and pay the women workers the same as the men.

At Peterborough the women are in a particular bargaining position and they have learned some trade union experience. They are on the lookout for ways GEC will try to

undermine their strength by keeping other groups of women workers unequal, and so the impetus has come from them to break down the divisions between the different types of work women do inside the factory. Here it was the women who wanted to make sure the canteen workers were not graded down and that they received equal pay at the male labourers rate. Because the women are also accustomed to doing jobs officially classified as men's work, it seemed it was easier to make connections between men and women's work, and between different groups of women manual workers, than between manual and non-manual workers. Margaret Robinson said, "So far we have had little success in linking up with female office workers."

Women white collar workers connect across divisions between manual and non-manual workers.

GEC Telecommunications, Coventry Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, Technical and Supervisory Section

But a woman in TASS, at GEC Telecommunications, Coventry, was optimistic that women might dissolve the suspicions between manual and non-manual workers more quickly than men. Where women lack trade union experience and find themselves pushed into organising for the first time, they can perhaps go past some of the barriers which the past has laid down between men in trade unions. She said, "Blue collar workers still don't trust white collar workers. They think they are management oriented. Women will overcome this better than men because there's not the craft history and that hierarchy holding us back. Most women can yak to one another."

In the early stages of the equal pay issue, TASS took the demands beyond the limits set down by the Tory legislation, extending the understanding of equal pay, and committed itself to backing a living wage for women by industrial action. Coventry is a strong union, industrial town and in 1972 the women at GEC Telecommunications had to think and talk and argue their way through the men's response that the women wanted to dominate the men. In three years the situation has changed from one where negotiations with the management were, "First settling the men's claims then, at the end, well now what about the women," to one where, "Now women and men go in as a unit."

A continuing dilemma for women trade unionists is how to secure male support for their struggle and yet at the same time keep raising their specific inequality as women at work. Women are at once part of the working class and in the power of employers like men, but they also have a specific oppression as a sex, as women. Women's liberation upsurges have had an influence. The same workers at GEC Coventry felt that, "To start with, it was put very extreme but it woke us up very sharply." At the time, also, the contradictions were shown up in what work it is considered right and proper for women to do, by the arrival of a woman who had worked as a

draughtsman in Czechoslovakia. By tradition in the UK draughtsmen are male workers. Tracers do the same work as draughtsmen, but tracers are always women. Tracers are neither paid as much as draughtsmen, nor allowed promotion opportunities to change their situation. So the women decided to take action. They were forced into token stoppages at work, and the union had to take it up on a national scale, before they won. The woman was put on the board as a draughtsman, on equal wages with the men.

Women challenging their specific inequality at work affects trade union structure.

Accumulating changes in the situation of women at work in Coventry GEC Telecommunications not only brings confidence to women that they are equal with men at work. This equality spans out in other directions, and especially it alters and turns around women's relationship to trade unions. The TASS negotiator felt that women were talking about unions more now. In the process of women confronting their own situation, their specific oppression as women workers, they also confront their whole lives in a way which extends beyond the money claim. "Quite honestly, the thing that's puzzling me is there's no escaping the dependence of women on other people" said the woman in TASS. It's not enough to provide a creche for a weekend union school. The women have to talk about getting meals ready, and baby sitters. The women have to bring the organisation of work done within the home into problems of organisation within the trade union.

The connections women workers make between home and work are especially significant for trade unions challenging multinational companies.

Audrey Wise who's in the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, in her pamphlet on *Women and the Struggle for Workers' Control* talks about how the discontinuous work lives of women means they "relate primarily to people and only secondarily to work." Women can introduce these concerns into work, they can challenge the economic wage relationship, they can challenge not only "the ownership but also the purpose of production".⁴ And she stresses the importance of women defending the protections they already have and extending these to male workers in order to alter life at home.

The housing and home life of people is affected by multinational combines like GEC. Cities and communities are formed to serve the needs of the capital, not people's needs. For instance, many workers employed by AEI especially moved to live in Harlow New Town, and when the redundancies were announced there, it meant the complete disturbance of their lives and future. Therefore the industrious activity of women workers in raising questions outside the wage bargain is doubly important, both in the

struggle against multinational control, and so then the connection can be made to the isolated situation of the women at home.

Women's equal pay strike brings out the importance of support between manual and non-manual workers, and between workers in separate factories.

GEC Salford Electrical Instruments Factory, Heywood and Eccles

Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff

Many of the women who have taken on the GEC combine are not life long trade unionists with years of learning behind them. They are being propelled into an unaccustomed militancy and there are many pressures against them. The women in the APEX dispute over equal pay at GEC SEI in Eccles and Heywood had not been on strike before. In 1972 the workers at the two factories united for the first time against GEC's refusal to comply with the Phase II legislation (that women's earnings were to move towards equal pay by narrowing the difference between their pay and that of the men). GEC denied there was any basis for comparison between male and female jobs, when that had in fact been the basis for its pay structure for years.

While it is true that ultimately the power to change society lies within the rank and file workers, the problem is that it's hard for everyone to realise this all at the same time. On a cold and windy picket line, a small cluster of women facing police or intimidation or guards or the confusing negotiating terms of officials and employers, with incomprehension and hostility from workmates, neighbours and even their own family, can understandably feel defensive and very alone. This makes support from workers, and a continual care on the part of officials to communicate every stage in negotiation, all the more crucial. The differing experience at Eccles and Heywood illustrates the importance of support.

At Eccles, the manual workers who belong to a different union (AUEW) were not keen to support the APEX clerical workers claims for equal pay. About 80% of the clerical workers were in the union. But they were divided about going on strike. The men who went into work outnumbered the few men in APEX who went on strike with the women, and that situation continued throughout the 11½ weeks.

The official union response of the district committee was to throw across a picket line to encourage support. Outside people supported this picket vigorously, but things went wrong. Flummoxed by lack of understanding and lack of contact with the people who continued working, the picketers insulted them. The manual workers responded to this impatience by changing their attitude to being in a union at all and were scared into hostility against the AUEW. Meanwhile, the management treated the pickets with brutality, driving straight through the picket line and using a German shepherd dog to intimidate them. It bit one

supporter and another, a woman in the women's movement, was arrested.

Heywood is the feeder factory to Eccles. There the clerical workers were newly organised. Many women only joined APEX the day before the strike took place. The clerical workers received more encouragement from the manual workers, and all the APEX men went on strike with the women.

To start with, negotiations were held with the SEI management, but as the strike went on talks moved to head office in Stanhope Gate, London, and it took a long meeting with Weinstock and Scamp to get GEC to shift. The women returned to work with an increase, and also an agreement for joint control between workers and management over job evaluation.

Women workers learn their power for the first time.

GEC Salford Electrical Instruments Factory, Heywood and Eccles

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers

The long grind of the strike events at SEI raised the fact of the women's inexperience at bargaining and everyone's need to understand the loopholes in the terms for equal pay and future job evaluation schemes. The district committee decided to hold a series of conferences between November 1973 and June 1974. While this was going on, the men manual workers who are in AUEW at Heywood went on strike in April because the employer backed down on a promised wage increase of £3. The SEI management delayed in various ways and the strike was getting on for five weeks. At Heywood the main productive force is the women's labour and the men's work serves their production. It looked as if two departments of the women manual workers, also AUEW members, might be laid off because the women can't continue working without the men, and the stewards called a mass meeting. For the first time the women manual workers realised their own power when their threats of strike action forced the management to give in and they brought the men's strike to an end by the weekend.

The SEI management offered the women manual workers 90 pence towards equal pay each year until 1975 but the district committee exposed this offer as incorrect. The women at Heywood had felt their strength when they supported the men, and they planned to stop piece work on July 29, 1974 to persuade the SEI management to change their minds about equal pay for the women. They expected the women at the Eccles branch factory, where the number of workers is double that at Heywood, to follow suit. But at Eccles a woman shop steward said it was easier to make more bonus money, and so the total amount of the women's weekly earnings was slightly higher than at Heywood. Also, it was only a year since some of the manual workers had torn up their union cards in anger against the APEX picketers, and feelings were still worried and tending towards anti-unionism. The manual workers at Eccles did not support the

decision taken by those at Heywood.

The Heywood management tried to black-mail the women by sending threatening letters to individuals. It did not provoke the reaction the employer intended. The feeling, "You can't speak to me like that" brought the women together and that morning they downed tools.

The importance of support between men and women workers.

Three weeks went by and the women realised what a battle they were stranded in. Four hundred women had lined themselves up against a monster company. Their fellow men manual workers did not support them. The other manual workers at Eccles did not support them. The official union attitude was support but cautious, especially after the problems about unionisation following the APEX dispute and their knowledge of GEC's ruthlessness.

After another seven weeks the women voted to return to work with a £2.80 cash rise. During the strike they won renegotiated piece work terms, which brings this up to a £5 increase in weekly take home pay. The wage structure for the manual workers before equal pay was graded into the rate for the women, and four other rates for the men, from labourers, up to semi-skilled, up to skilled, and then skilled toolmaker. Where a woman receives the same base rate as a semi-skilled man, she does not receive the same bonus rate. Then GEC suddenly discovered that they didn't have the male grade of "labourers", and they decided that women could fit neatly into this pay category, which GEC wanted to classify the "unskilled" grade. Since the strike ended at Heywood the women AUEW members have started a working party to supervise job evaluation, but their negotiations with GEC nearly broke up over this. However, they would not go on strike again unless the women at Eccles were definitely behind them. The women's object is to keep the same four grade structure, with the women's pay equal to that of semi-skilled men and, if possible, to achieve a higher rate than the one that exists now.

The women workers at SEI took on a distant Sir Arnold Weinstock (Managing Director of GEC), smoothly calculated in his actions to prevent them claiming equal pay. Yet now the women have realised what sort of employer they are up against, and how local management acts under GEC head office control, refusing to grant the women's claims for as long as possible. The strikes for equal pay have been very drawn out and, looking back at their long battle, the women are furious. A union official in AUEW said the women in Heywood "want revenge on Weinstock."

At the beginning of the strike, 18 women had gone straight back into work. But from the initial disappointment and feeling that scabs should be sacked, the women have put their energy into forming a closed shop at Heywood, so new starters must join the AUEW. At Eccles, the women did not automatically get the basic wage rise the women won at Heywood. The links between the manual workers at the two factories are ►

NEWS



Convenor Beardmore crossing Spon Street picket line.

being structured again slowly, and the appointment of a woman as chair of shop stewards to replace the previous man at Eccles has been a result.

Whereas the women manual and non-manual workers connected quickly when the manual workers supported the APEX strikers at Heywood, the breaking down of the division between men and women manual workers has been much more difficult. The women have to face struggles to persuade the men that if the women remain a cheap source of labour to GEC, then that is more a threat to the men's jobs than if the women are equally paid. This determination has altered their response to a male fellow trade unionist who intimidated them while they were on strike. They decided against the initial attitude which was to expel him from the union.

GEC Spon Street, Coventry

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers

This is a problem faced by other women workers for GEC. In September 1973 at Spon Street, Coventry, the women decided to strike against the lowering of their piece rates by changes at work, and against the opposition of the AUEW convenor Albert Beardmore. Beardmore blustered, "I'm not going to have my men laid off by a bunch of silly girls." The picketers here also faced violence and one woman was knocked down. Beardmore, twice tried to get his deputy, Elsie Noles, expelled from AUEW. The second time, the situation was desperate and the factory had been closed down, but the AUEW district committee overruled Beardmore's kangaroo court of shop stewards and reinstated her.

Women take their new militancy through into provoking changes in the union.

"The unions must get going", the women

at Heywood told Peter Bramah, the AUEW district secretary. Because joining a trade union has not been automatic for women, it has not been an end in itself. It has been a commotion. Learning their own power, provoked into militancy and into the problems of organising as women workers, and realising they were up against a giant multinational company, has prompted the women into talking with AUEW about a combine committee to link workers in different GEC factories, similar to the one already in the Sheffield area. The district secretary has mapped out proposals for the combine committee, including a woman's sub-committee in its formal structure.

The women's sub-committee is not only necessary because the women must have an island to avoid being swamped by male trade unionists, or a recognition that women's working lives are different to men's, but it's also a location from which women can reach out towards other women. Women don't leave their experience as women behind them when they become active in trade unions. On the picket line outside Eccles, women organised cooking facilities for making tea and chairs and tables and in the house they occupied outside Heywood they put in carpets as well. They want the women's committee to extend beyond the industrial, and to be political and social. They want to create their own portrayals of aspects of working women's lives, some of them are artists, and some are planning a monthly newsheet.

The committee for the combine set up on the impetus of the women have had two meetings at Birmingham and Sheffield, and the next one planned for Scotland. Ten AUEW members are going to print a newspaper to sell at five pence. The first issue should be out in April.

It is important how these stirrings of women's consciousness are affecting the structure of unions, not only of male domination within the union, but how the unions react to situations and how they work. The official response to women is not uniform.⁵ Not thinking about distinguishing these differences can mean the feminist equivalent of Peter and the Wolf (like the first article about the women's equal pay dispute at SEI in *Spare Rib* No. 31). To cry 'Sell Out' for all occasions whether it is, in fact, a sell out, whether it's lack of communication between officials and workers, or whether it's a time for cutting your losses and returning to work, would mean a real sell out would probably be ignored and the criticism not taken seriously. Nor has a reactionary or chauvinist trade union official been specially employed by the capitalist class to sell out workers or women, whereas a left official is caught in a contradictory and knotty situation comparable to that of a teacher faced with student militancy, when women's actions erupt around him. Looking at all the complicated struggles of women against GEC brings out many of these general problems.

At Heywood, women's liberation groups from nearby and the Manchester Working Women's Charter group gave practical help with the creche, organising a rally, going along to the social service, and collecting money for the strike fund. If help spills over into interference then it's no good. On the other hand, communication is important. Women's struggles against redundancy and over equal pay are complicated and vary in different situations. Perhaps it raises questions about a means of communication, about whether the women's movement can help in some unions, about how we learn from each other's particular experiences in many different situations?●

1. 'Striking Progress' in *Red Reg* No.5 1972-1973. also 1973-1974 in *Red Reg* No.8, from Stratford Villas, London NW1. 20 pence.

2. 'General Electric Company', *Labour Research*, September 1974, from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF. 23½ pence.

3. *GEC Rank'n'File*, August 1973. Combine committee newspaper which published five issues until early 1974.

4. *Women and the Struggle for Workers' Control* by Audrey Wise. Partisan Press, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham NG7 4ET. 12 pence.

5. Bea Campbell and Sheila Rowbotham have done work on the differences from and similarities to men's actions in the actions taken by women workers and differences in official response. 'Women Workers and the Class Struggle', in *Radical America* Vol. 8, No. 5, 50 pence plus postage from PO Box 82, Cambridge, Mass. 02140, USA.

This is the second article, following one in the previous issue of *Spare Rib* (No.34) which gave the economic context of the General Electric Company. Both these articles were written in response to criticism by women shop stewards at SEI, Heywood, to the original description of their equal pay strike in *Spare Rib* issue No.31.

NEWS

CRISIS AT FAKENHAM WORKERS CO-OPERATIVE

Three years after their occupation of a shoe factory in Fakenham, Norfolk, the women have found that they are in exactly the same position as they were then.

Fakenham is a small town in Norfolk with a population of just over three and a half thousand. The nearest town which has any sizeable industry is Norwich. A five minutes walk from the garage above which Fakenham Enterprises is housed will bring you to great stretches of ploughed land.

This makes a strange setting for an occupation. Nevertheless this is what happened in 1972 when ten of the 59 women who worked for Sextons and Everard - a firm which made shoes for Marks and Spencer - barricaded themselves into one of the workshops. Sextons and Everard were bankrupt and the women wanted to work for themselves.

The occupation lasted eighteen months, during which time the women made plans to organise the work themselves, and made contact with as many people as possible trying to get financial help and to secure orders.

In July 1972 Scot Bader, a firm which was "pioneering cooperative management", agreed to give the women a loan so that they could set themselves up as a company. They became Fakenham Enterprises and moved into the workshop above the garage.

Fakenham, March 1975: There were about 40 industrial sewing machines

in the room. Only ten women had come in that day. A few women were sitting at the machines sewing shoe uppers, gold and silver court shoes for Shingler and Thetford. A little boy of about four was helping one of the women cut the threads each time she came to the end of a shoe.

They were able to buy some more machines with the money from Scot Bader and some of the women who had left at the time of the occupation came back to work. The machines allow the women to produce a

number of different things: finished clothes, shoe uppers, leather bags, belts, coats, and even once a sample chastity belt. This was important because it meant that they were able to accept a number of contracts for different kinds of work. However this situation was not as good as it seemed.

Firstly there were the contracts. The first contract was for a firm in Kent which asked them to produce government bags for stationery offices. This didn't pay enough. The

next contract was for a designer who wanted them to make up some dresses she had designed. These were to be sold at Harrods. The dresses were apparently very beautiful and gave great pleasure to the people who made them, but there were only a few.

Nancy told me that one of their possible orders was making the leather cases for bug detectors. When we had worked out what a bug detector was, Nancy cried out, "Christ, it's just like George Orwell."

NEWS

The contract work for Pell Footwear provides the best example of the main problem with contract work. At one time Pell Footwear asked the women to make up 18,000 pairs of shoe uppers. With this contract went a time limit so that it was necessary to employ all the women who would work for Fakenham Enterprises. The next order which came was for 3,000 pairs; there wasn't enough work for all the women. In these ways the women found that they were totally dependent on the firms which handed out the work, where and when they wanted to.

They told me that women in London started a support group during the period of the occupation, and helped by getting orders for the women in Fakenham but this folded after a number of months. Members of the International Socialists visited the women regularly, and at one time copies of Socialist Worker could be seen lying around the room. International Marxist Group gave the women some orders, but on one occasion when the goods were made up, they weren't collected.

Then there are the problems which are associated with the particular industries they are producing for.

Take the shoe industry. The women at Fakenham cannot sell the shoes they produce, for a number of reasons. Perhaps the main one is that they have no retail outlets. Fakenham is not the heart of the boot and shoe trade and they cannot easily build up the necessary relationships to ensure a market for themselves. They are forced into a position of dependency on the big monopolies in the trade, notably the British Shoe Corporation with their retail avenues like Freeman Hardy and Willis, Dolcis and Saxone.

"I don't know whether it is just chance that we are not getting any orders at this time, but I have my doubts."

Even if they could build up these outlets, they are in another dilemma because they are unable to produce the whole shoe. To do this they would need some heavy machinery they do not possess and which they couldn't install because the weight of the machines would be too great for the floor to take. To overcome the problems they would need to have the capital to move to different premises and to actually buy the machinery. This money is not available. Firms like Scot Bader show that "pioneers" of their character

cannot change their spots as easily as they might like to be seen to do.

A man walked in with some more shoe uppers to be sewn, and stayed some time talking to some of the women. After he had gone, I learned that he was spying on the women for one of the firms in the takeover bid.

The money Scot Bader contributed to Fakenham Enterprises was only given in times of cash crisis. They were not willing to give the women a lump sum which could have been used for planning a project which the women thought would be viable. The women have thus been tied to a day-to-day existence which deals mostly with staving off crises and rules out the possibility of finding the right sort of production. The other form of control Scot Bader insisted on was the presence of two of their managers to "help" the women. It wasn't until these two men left a year ago that the women were able to break even for the first time.

The telephone rang for Nancy. She came back to say that the board of directors (Scot Bader) had just met that afternoon and that they were going to come up with a price the next day, March 25. She explained that Scot Bader were trying to decide how much they thought Fakenham Enterprises were worth, and how much they could ask the British Shoe Corporation (Shingler and Thetford) for them. Edna exclaimed that it was just like a cattle market.

In the clothing trade the situation is different but equally problematic. Again, Fakenham is off the map as far as the trade goes and direct sales are difficult. But as well as the large businesses there is a plethora of small independent companies who produce away to their hearts' content, and are notorious for the use they make of sweated labour. It is simply not on the cards for these women to sweat away long hours for abysmal wages in order to survive the competition.

One of the women who had taken part in the occupation had left to have a baby. She came in to talk to her friends, bringing her baby girl with her - she called her Kojak because she didn't have much hair. She was amazed that her 19 year old sister was taking home £44 per week as a cleaner in a Cambridge hospital. At Fakenham they all get 59p per hour and the Friday before, some of the women worked without getting paid.

Women at Fakenham have always been forced into a position of dependency, either through the withholding of money or the withholding of orders. Even now, their future is being decided by Scot Bader and the British Shoe Corpo-

ration. They are not represented in these discussions.

At the end of March this year, the situation was similar to that in 1972. Appeals were made at the Women and Socialism Conference in London for more orders and for possible designs and bright ideas to be sent to Fakenham. But at the same time the British Shoe Corporation were trying to get the women to agree to become part of their subsidiary Shingler and Thetford. If this were agreed to, it would mean a steady supply of work and employment for the women.

"If it meant the difference between a job or not having a job, then I'd want them to take it over."

"It would be terrible, they'd get rid of all the old ones. They wouldn't want them to be around, they'd probably think that they'd mean trouble."

But the work would be different. The managers would return and the children would disappear. If the managers returned then they would decide what work was to be done and by whom. A lot of worry would be removed and who is it that doesn't think "It would be so much simpler if I could just have a regular job" when you begin to notice the bags under your eyes?

One woman told me that before she came to work here she had worked in a canning factory which had now closed down. She used to wash, sort and can carrots and celery. They had to stand with water around their feet, with heaters placed just above their heads so that the heat beat down on their heads and shoulders, while the frozen carrots passed them on the belts. She said that she couldn't go and work in a place like that again. □

Cathy Haw

By the beginning of April the situation at Fakenham was desperate and there was work for only 6 out of 31 workers. Please send orders (down to £10) for clothes, bags, belts in leather, suede and pigskin to Nancy McGrath, Fakenham Enterprises, 14 Norwich Road, Fakenham, tel: 0328-2712.

A Fakenham Support Group has been formed based on Cambridge Women's Centre and can be contacted c/o Wendy James, 31 Panton Street, Cambridge, tel: 0223-55889.



ABORTION ACT THREAT :3

In Spare Ribs 32 and 34 we traced the political history of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill story to the point where James White MP had obtained a Second Reading for his wrecking Bill by 203 votes to 88, and the government had decided to set up a Select Committee to examine the problem afresh. Now read on...

It was originally decided that the Select Committee would consist of 11 members. Then this figure was increased to 15. Then the names were announced, and a fearful row broke out over the composition of the Select Committee which is still in progress at time of writing. The members at the moment are as follows:

Supporters of Liberal Abortion:
Betty Boothroyd (Lab. West Bromwich)

Joyce Butler (Lab. Wood Green)
Helene Hayman (Lab. Welwyn & Hatfield)

David Steel (Lib. Roxburgh)

Neutrals:

Dr Maurice Miller (Lab. E. Kilbride)

Sir George Sinclair (Cons. Dorking)
Rt Hon Fred Willey (Lab. Sunderland N.) *Chairman*

Opponents of Liberal Abortion hereafter known as CPL (Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby)

Leo Abse (Lab. Pontypool)

Kevin McNamara (Lab. Kingston-upon-Hull) RC

John Biggs-Davison (Cons. Epping) RC

Andrew Bowden (Cons. Brighton Kemptown)

Sir Bernard Braine (Cons. SE Essex)

Anthony Fell (Cons. Yarmouth) RC

Elaine Kellert-Bowman (Cons. Lancaster)

James White (Lab. Glasgow Pollok)

From this list it will be obvious why a row has broken out. The CPL can always outvote the liberals and the neutrals put together, even on such occasions as *all* the neutrals vote with the liberals. Moreover, 3 Roman Catholics (20% of committee) represent the 14% of Roman Catholics in the country. Only 4 women (27% of committee) represent the 52% of women in the country. The Society for Protection

of the Unborn Child thinks this is too many women. JR Jowett, chairman of its branch in Bradford, explained why in the *Telegraph and Argus* on 11 March 1975:

"Men outnumber women in Parliament by more than 10 to 1. Why then should the Select Committee contain 25% of women?"

On 3 March, a deputation of 10 Labour women MPs and Christopher Price MP as 'statutory man' saw the Leader of the House, Edward Short, to ask that Renee Short and Gwyneth Dunwoody be allowed to join the committee so that women might be a little more realistically represented. Mr Short was said to have agreed to this, until faced with threats of resignation from Leo Abse and James White. The women MPs warned the Parliamentary Labour Party that they would not put up with this treatment and threatened 'strike action'. Jack Ashley was heard to remark that if Abse and White chose to resign in a huff, "that was a fate the party could endure" (*Guardian* 14 March). At time of writing the row is still in progress, and the anti-feminists are still in the ascendent.

TUC Women Lead the Way

On 19 February Ethel Chipchase, TUC spokesperson on women, informed the *Morning Star* there was no mention of abortion in the TUC Women's Charter because it was "a controversial subject". She said "some people don't support abortion, like some religious groups..."

On 8 March the TUC held its South-East regional council. Delegates representing over 200 trade union branches and trades councils criticised the Charter for omitting all mention of abortion or birth control.

And the good news from the Women's TUC the following week was reported in the *Yorkshire Post* on 15 March:

"Women trade unionists voted overwhelmingly yesterday for abortion on demand. The TUC Women's Conference, meeting in Hastings, carried an amendment calling for abortion on demand in the NHS and urged the TUC to mount a campaign for this. The decision was greeted with applause by the 250 delegates. It is the first time abortion has been discussed by any TUC conference and observers were surprised at the size of the majority."

This vote will come as a hideous blow to James White, a life long member of the Transport and General Workers' Union, who prides himself on his union connections and influence. Judith Gray, Judith Hunt and Pat Knight who lead this fight are to be warmly congratulated on their very significant victory, which may spell the beginning of the end for the CPL on this Bill.

Private Session

The Select Committee has started its sittings in private. These take place in the House of Commons every Monday afternoon from 4 to 6. Soon they will be taking evidence in public. Then you can ask for a ticket to go in and listen to the proceedings. If you, or your trade union, or your women's group, or your professional association want to give evidence to the Select Committee, and it is important that everyone who has any evidence to submit should do so, please write as soon as possible and tell the Clerk to the Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill at the House of Commons. Write to Mr J.R. Rose, Committee Office, House of Commons, London, SW1.

Catholics Get Tough

How closely have the Catholics been involved in James White's Bill? Mr George Crozier, a Scottish solicitor, let the cat out of the bag in the columns of the *Scottish Catholic Observer* on 28 February:

"Announcements from the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and The Innocents, who were arranging meetings, were read in the churches throughout the archdiocese, and the people were advised to write to Mr White or to their MP supporting the Bill to amend the Abortion Act. Mr White received 22,000 such letters. Many electors made it clear that they were registering their protest against the Abortion Act as a result of announcements made in churches. I was assisting Mr White as his legal adviser and not as chairman of the Glasgow Lay Council. I have been unable to attend Glasgow Lay Council meetings since November owing to the amount of work involved in drafting Mr White's Bill... Pro-abortionists reckon that if this Bill becomes law it will decrease abortions in Britain by an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 annually. Surely

the saving of so many lives earns our support. I do not need to explain... that Catholics want complete repeal of the Abortion Act... By supporting Mr White's Bill we are cutting down drastically the evils that flow from the Abortion Act."

Catholics were equally active in England, as Robert Kilroy-Silk MP has discovered to his cost. The local parish priest in his constituency, after stating that priests did not 'in general' take part in party politics, went on to say:

"But in this particular Bill, a Catholic, if he could not get the Abortion Act repealed, would be bound to do anything that would make it less sweeping."

Commented Tom Bibby, "father of six children" and secretary of Ormskirk branch of SPUC:

"An awful lot of people are going to feel that Mr Kilroy-Silk is not the MP who ought to represent us... He is going to lose an awful lot of Christian votes."

What agitated Mr Bibby was that he went to see Mr Kilroy-Silk personally, who promised that he would attend the debate and then vote "according to his lights". It never occurred to Mr Bibby that Mr Kilroy-Silk's lights might lead him to favour liberal abortion. It is, after all, a well known axiom that only anti-abortionists have consciences that need respecting.

And in Richmond, Sir Anthony Royle has been hauled over the coals by eagle eyed Catholic constituents. Not that he voted against James White. He did not vote at all. He was away. So he was given a ticking off in the magazine of St Mary Magdalen's Roman Catholic Church, and this was then publicised in the *Richmond, Twickenham and Barnes Herald* (6 March).

The Women's Movement has a lot to learn from Catholic activism, and not much time to do it in. Have you written to your MP yet to congratulate or criticise him or her for the way he or she voted on 7 February? Have you publicised your views and those of your friends, and colleagues and neighbours in your local newspaper? If not, please don't delay. Sally Hesmondhalgh will be very glad to help, and please send your MP's reply to her: A Woman's Right to Choose, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9DE. Tel: 278 4575. □

Liz Warren

NEWS

Under the proposed Abortion (Amendment) Bill foreign women would be unable to come to Britain for termination because there would be a residency qualification of 20 weeks and a legal limit for abortion of 20 weeks.

The promoters of this Bill would like us to believe that this would stop foreign women being exploited by doctors who overcharge. Their concern for women does not extend to caring about the sort of exploitation they will encounter in the backstreets of their own countries.

The private sector in Britain has ample room for all the foreign women who wish to come here. Money is certainly being made but a standard fee for abortions in private clinics would solve the problem of economic exploitation until such time as women have successfully liberalised abortion law throughout Europe.

It is incredible that such discriminatory legislation could be introduced by a socialist MP during so called "International Women's Year". The British press has been predictably chauvinist in hardly commenting on this clause of the bill. What is the situation in Western Europe? How many women still need to come here for help?

The world wide situation is confused and confusing. A step forward in Italy is matched by a step back in the United States. The law is changing so fast that parts of this article could be out of date within a week.



Adele Faccio at the National Abortion Conference in Rome, January 1975. She was arrested immediately after this conference ended

Netherlands

It is estimated that of the 50,000 abortions carried out both legally and illegally in the Netherlands in 1973, only about 18,000 of these were done for Dutch women. The Netherlands have developed a good reputation for their safe, cheap clinics and many women from France and Germany travel there.

Strangely, the Netherlands do not have a liberal abortion law. Under the present Act the only grounds are danger to the life of the pregnant woman. In practice policy varies from one area to another and from one doctor to another. The government has preferred to turn a blind eye rather than raise the issue in Parliament.

The existence of restrictive law is a danger to liberal practice and this has been amply proved recently. In the Catholic South members of the public forcibly prevented women from entering a clinic which was then closed by police. In Amsterdam the public prosecutor attempted to close a clinic and served a writ on doctors working there. The judge refused to make a decision about the

clinic and referred the matter to the public health inspector. The doctors have not yet been tried. The Minister of Justice, Mr. Van Agt, has come out against abortion and this is bound to have an effect on the way the law is interpreted.

There have been several rather feeble attempts to bring the law into line with practice. Since 1970 four different Bills have been introduced, three of which are under discussion at the moment. This shilly-shallying derives from the religious affiliations of the Netherlands' myriad political parties and the extremely delicate balance of power. The Netherlands are at present governed by a socialist/conservative coalition with the centre parties in opposition.

Feminist groups are understandably furious that such a fundamental women's issue should be sacrificed to political interests. They have formed a combined National Committee (very much on the lines of the National Abortion Campaign in Britain), which has brought together most of the women's organisations, political parties and trades unions to fight on a broad platform of abortion reform. Their first demonstration, of 7,000 people, took place in December. They hope for a much bigger turnout next September to coincide with the expected date

of the government decision on the three proposals.

Italy

On February 28 the Italian Constitutional Supreme Court declared that Article 546 of the Fascist Penal Code against abortion was unconstitutional because "The interests of the conceived child can be against the good of others."

They therefore acknowledged that women also have the right to be protected. This means that in a very limited way abortion will now be legal but the position will remain unclear until a new law can be made.

This declaration from the court has precipitated enormous shifts of opinion in the various political parties: only one of which, the Radical Party, an extra-parliamentary pressure group, has supported abortion in the past. The RP was responsible for forcing a referendum on the issue of divorce and they are busy collecting signatures to try and do the same thing for abortion.

The Socialists have proposed a Bill allowing abortion in the first ten weeks on the Health Service and establishing other grounds for termination when it would be dangerous to take the pregnancy through the term. The majority Christian Democrat Party believes that "Abortion is not the most important issue in Italy today. We don't believe the data about abortion (300,000 a year) and the church continues to condemn abortion because it is against the right to life." The Communist Party, at present courting the CD with an eye on a seat in the coalition cabinet, has come out tentatively in favour of abortion but is not committing itself any further.

All this activity did not happen spontaneously. As in France, the real agitation came from the women's movement. In 1973 Adele Faccio started the Centre for Information on Sterilisation and Abortion (CISA). It was given space in the Radical Party offices in Milan. CISA set up links with sympathetic doctors for early treatment and sent other women to clinics abroad. Any doctors who worked with them had to use safe vacuum abortion. Late last year a clinic was opened publicly in Florence and at the same time the Radical Party pledged itself to actively supporting the abortion campaign.

The police politely ignored it all until the fascist news magazine *Candida* produced an article accus-

Angela Phillips (International Freelance Library)

ing the Radical Party of taking money from the clinic. The clinic was raided and Dr. Concianni and his assistants arrested. The following day the secretary of the Radical Party gave himself up as an "accessory" to abortion. Adele Faccio from CISA went into hiding until January 26 when she was arrested on stage in front of four thousand people at the National Abortion Conference in Rome.

Huge demonstrations were staged outside the prison where she was held and thousands marched in Milan, Genoa, Rome and Turin. By March 1, after the timely announcement of the Supreme Court on abortion, they had all been released. According to Adele, this decision was made on strictly political grounds because of the publicity she was drawing to the Abortion issue.

West Germany

In 1973, 11,000 of an estimated 800,000 West German women came to Britain for abortions because they would risk damage, death or five years' imprisonment if they had it done in their own country. On June 21 1974 a law allowing abortion on demand in the first twelve weeks was passed in parliament.

The opposition party immediately referred this clause of the law to the Federal Constitutional Court protesting that it contravened the "Basic Law" which guarantees "the right to life and the inviolability of the person." The court, composed of seven men and one woman, deliberated until February of this year when they declared the new law unconstitutional. A ruling which could not be overturned without a two-thirds majority in parliament.

As a temporary measure the government will extend the original provisions which related to late termination to cover the first twelve weeks. It should therefore be possible to have a legal termination on grounds of extreme danger to the life or health of the pregnant woman, or if there is a strong possibility of the child being disabled. They hope also to add another clause to cover the social conditions of the family.

Protest against the court decision was immediate and vigorous. Thousands of women marched in cities all over West Germany, and demonstrations were organised by the West German Trades Union Federation and the Social Democratic Party. Two days after the verdict a bomb exploded at the court.

The Women's Liberation Move-

ment has been actively involved in campaigning and giving help and advice to women. In 1974 they took six doctors to court for crimes in connection with abortion (rape, bribery and medical mistreatment). They have produced a book on abortion and contraception and since 1972 have been holding counselling sessions in women's centres. The women have decided not to give the addresses of illegal abortionists in Germany anymore because they feel it is "politically wrong and irresponsible to bring 'trade' to people who are not interested in abortion reform, who make huge profits out of women's misfortunes, and often give poor medical treatment and cause irreparable damage." They now help women to go abroad for safe, and cheaper treatment. They are hoping eventually to open their own health centre with the help of other groups and women doctors.

France

In November 1974 abortion became legal in France. This has been represented as the victory of one woman, the Minister of Health, Simone Veil. Mme Veil, who by her own confession has no particular political beliefs, was instrumental in pushing legislation through against solid opposition from Catholic MPs and the intervention of the Vatican.

However the Bill would never have entered the portals of Parliament without the work of French feminist groups (MLAC and Choisir whose open organisation of illegal abortion services and public defence of a mother and daughter charged under the Abortion Act had reduced the law to an unworkable farce.

Under the old law a doctor could get up to ten years in prison for performing abortions and yet immediately before the introduction of the Bill there were an estimated 400,000 illegal abortions a year with an additional 50,000 women travelling to the Netherlands or England for treatment. MLAC (Mouvement pour la Libération de l'Avortement et de la Contraception) set up clandestine clinics and arranged trips to properly vetted clinics abroad. The use of the Karman cannula technique by specially trained lay workers turned back-street abortion into a relatively safe and simple process with maximum support from members of MLAC - for those women who knew where to go.

Of the 490 deputies who debated

the Abortion Bill only seven were women. The debate lasted three days, during which a group of women from Brittany led by a priest walked slowly around the chamber reciting the rosary. In the end it got through. The reaction of the anti-abortion lobby was immediate. Following the example of West Germany they filed suit with the constitutional court arguing that abortion was contrary to the constitution and Article 2 of the European Human Rights Convention. The case was lost.

Abortion is now legal on demand in the first ten weeks of pregnancy. However:

- 1) You must see a family counsellor and a doctor before seeking a termination. They cannot refuse but they can attempt to influence and delay.
- 2) Advertising referral services is not legal so information is difficult to obtain.
- 3) Hospitals may only have a 25% quota of abortion patients, which rules out special clinics.
- 4) France is a predominantly Catholic country, and many gynaecologists have already refused to do terminations.
- 5) No abortions are free though the prices are controlled.
- 6) After ten weeks the law is very restrictive.

The combination of these clauses will clearly militate against poor and ill-informed women. Abortion will not be easy to get for some time to come.

MLAC are still campaigning, both for full implementation and further liberalisation of the law. In March, 250 women invaded a hospital, bringing with them 18 doctors who, with support from junior medical staff, took over the operating theatres and did 30 abortions in an afternoon. The action was followed up by a delegation from MLAC to the hospital administrators who conceded that from now on three abortions per day would be performed at that hospital.

MLAC have also called an international conference in Rome on April 19/20 to discuss abortion.

Switzerland

Switzerland was the first European country to liberalise its abortion laws, before World War 2. For many years women from other countries went there for "weekend rest cures" in private Swiss clinics.

The penal code of 1937 is still law in Switzerland. It allows abortion on grounds of danger to the woman's

life or risk of permanent injury to her health. In order to obtain an abortion the written consent of the woman is required as well as the consent of the operating doctor and her own GP who comes under the control of the local authority. This law has been interpreted at the discretion of the canton authorities and the results have been very uneven. In the German-speaking and Roman Catholic areas practically no abortions are performed. In other cantons it is virtually on demand.

In 1971 the Union Suisse pour Dérégulariser l'Avortement started a campaign for the complete repeal of the Abortion and two alternatives are being discussed: either abortion on demand or the standardisation of procedures across the country. If the latter is decided upon the USDA will withdraw its own demand. A referendum on the subject is to be held in the near future.

Norway

The abortion law in Norway is similar to our own but abortion is more difficult to get because all requests are channelled through the Health Service and policy varies from one area to another.

Acceptance for termination depends on the opinions of a three-person committee. Opinion varies and with it your chance of getting an abortion. In Oslo you have a 90%-95% chance of getting an abortion. However, when a new person joined a committee in the north of Norway last year figures dropped by 30%.

Official statistics don't take into account those women who don't get as far as the committee. Theoretically a woman sees her GP who will help her make out an application for termination. Not all doctors are very liberal about this and if they refuse it is not easy to make an application direct. One group has tried to provide a service to circumvent this problem: the Sosialistisk Legeforening (The Socialist Doctors' Association). They work in Oslo and will write an application on behalf of a patient direct to the local hospital. If her hospital is known to be unsympathetic they will try and get a bed elsewhere.

There is a campaign in Norway to liberalise the law. The Minister for the Environment - a woman and a doctor - has been active in it and was instrumental in bringing a Bill for abortion on demand before Parliament last November. It was defeated by one vote. □

Angela Phillips

MPs AGAINST THE ABORTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

In the last issue we printed names of the 203 MPs who voted for the Second Reading of James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill on February 7.

The 88 MPs who voted against the Second Reading, and whose support we need in the fight to defend the 1967 Abortion Act, are listed below.

Archer, Peter
Atkinson, Norman
Barnett, Guy (Greenwich)
Bates, Alf
Bennett, Andrew (Stockport N.)
Bidwell, Sydney
Booth, Albert
Brown, Hugh D. (Provan)
Brown, Ronald (Hackney S.)
Butler, Mrs Joyce (Wood Green)
Carmichael, Neil
Colquhoun, Mrs Maureen
Cook, Robin F. (Edin. C)
Corbett, Robin
Cronin, John
Crouch, David
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, G. (Islington S)
Davies, Bryan (Enfield N)
Deakins, Eric
de Freitas, Rt. Hon Sir Geoffrey
Douglas-Mann, Bruce
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Edwards, Robert (Wolv SE)
Ellis, John (Brigg & Scun)
Flannery, Martin
Fletcher, Raymond (Ilkeston)
Forrester, John
Fowler, Gerald (The Wrekin)
Fraser, John (Lambeth, N'w'd)
Freeson, Reginald
Garrett, John (Norwich S)
Gilbert, Dr John
Graham, Ted
Grylls, Michael
Hayman, Mrs Helene
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen, N)
Hunt, John
Jackson, Miss Margaret (Lincoln)
Jay, Rt Hon Douglas
Jeger, Mrs Lena
Jenkins, Hugh (Putney)
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy (Stechford)
Kerr, Russell
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lestor, Miss Joan (Eton & Slough)

Lipton, Marcus
Litterick, Tom
Lyon, Alexander (York)
Lyons, Edward (Bradford W)
MacFarquhar, Roderick
Marquand, David
Meacher, Michael
Mendelson, John
Miller, Mrs Millie (Ilford N)
Moyle, Roland
Nelson, Anthony
Newens, Stanley
Ogden, Eric
Pardoe, John
Park, George
Parker, John
Pavitt, Laurie
Price C. (Lewisham W)
Radice, Giles
Richardson, Miss Jo
Roper, John
Shaw, Arnold (Ilford South)
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs Renée (Wolv NE)
Silkin, Rt Hon John (Deptford)
Silkin, Rt Hon S. C. (Dulwich)
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, David (Roxburgh)
Strang, Gavin
Strauss, Rt Hon G. R.
Summerskill, Hon Dr Shirley
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Bolton W)
Thomas, Mike (Newcastle E)
Thomas, Ron (Bristol NW)
Thorne, Stan (Preston South)
Ward, Michael
Weetch, Ken
Weitzman, David
Whitehead, Phillip
Wilson, Alexander (Hamilton)
Wilson, William (Coventry SE)

Tellers for the Noes:

Mr. Leslie Huckfeldt and Mr. William Hamling.

SPAIN: WHERE ONLY SILENCE IS SAFE

The Spanish political police roved Barcelona one day in September last year. At various points in the city they detained first Regina Falcon, age 20; then her brother Carlos Enrique, age 17; her mother Lidia Falcon; and finally Lidia's husband Eliseo Bayo.

Regina had left her mother in bed with a liver ailment at their Barcelona apartment. She thought she was alone at city police headquarters. But in the long corridor she encountered her father. A whispered, hurried conference confirmed that the whole family had been detained.

Late in the night, wrapped in blankets against the damp cold, they were escorted to waiting cars. Regina was pushed in beside Eliseo. Under the blankets they clutched hands, turning to watch Lidia's sole, small figure capped by her remarkable auburn hair climb into the car behind them. In silence their two-car procession made the long trip to Madrid and morning.

Today Regina and Carlos Enrique are back in the Barcelona apartment. Lidia and Eliseo remain in their Madrid prisons. No formal charges have been filed, but they have been classified "terrorists" under Spanish law. Lidia's liver ailment was aggravated by blows to her stomach during prolonged interrogation, and she was moved to the prison hospital. The cigarette burns on her arms are healing now, and she has been returned to the prison proper. She spends her days at her typewriter, continuing the struggle from inside her prison cell. She has won the support of the women on the prison staff who have allowed friends in to wave to her and her writings to be smuggled out.

One of a handful of women who obtained their degrees and took up law practice in the fifties in Spain, Lidia immediately began specialising in women's rights, practising law all day and writing all night. Her articles on women and the family, women and labour, women and society have appeared in all major magazines and newspapers. An article on marriage - which opens with a quote from Engels - was printed in *Triunfo*, a magazine with wide circulation. The issue was banned by the regime because of the

article, and only a very few copies survive. Among her books *Mujer y sociedad* (Women and Society) has had a large reading, and her latest book - *Cartas a una idiota española* (Letters to a Stupid Spanish Woman) - is a current bestseller. The letters, addressed to her friend and fellow-prisoner Eva Forest, deal with the growing consciousness of her oppression as a woman. Not even her privileged position as an intellectual, lawyer and writer has protected her from Spanish *machismo*.

Falcon has become the theoretician of the emerging Spanish women's liberation movement. A recent public meeting in Barcelona was called to discuss Spain's participation in International Women's Year activities. It drew an overflow crowd as angry and excited women opposed their representation by Franco-approved women's groups and laid out an alternative process of study commissions and workshops to culminate in counter-representation. To these women Lidia Falcon is a familiar friend. She has forged out their path.

In Spain the struggle against women's oppression is a struggle against all oppression. A feminist in the Spanish perspective is almost always first a socialist. Socialist organisations ranging the full spectrum of the left each meet in groups of fives and sixes of otherwise total strangers who use fictitious names on different days at different places on each occasion. And like women around the world Spanish women have been sent out to make lunch at the meetings they have organised, and have thus learned the need to come together to recognise, protect and demand their rights. They are now taking up the struggle as women.

In a country where only silence is safe, Falcon's words are everywhere. Men call her dominating. Her sisters call her strong.

Falcon's friend Forest and Antonio Duran are expected to come to trial by court martial within three weeks. Falcon's trial and that of the 15 others rounded up with them last September 16 will follow. Any death sentence handed down in Spain is enacted within 24 hours of its military approval in order to prevent international protest.

A week of international solidarity with these and all Spanish political prisoners has been called for April 26 to May 1. In London it is being coordinated by the Spanish Solidarity Committee. Call 01-837 6954 for information about the Committee. □

Marie Haigh

CLASSIFIEDS

If you want to join or start a group, find work or a travel companion, start a household or share a house, having something to sell or swap . . . then run your own Classified Ad.

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Copy date: April 25 for May 21.

Tick if Box No required

Tick if Semi-display required

I enclose £ for no of issues.

Name:

Address:

Print your ad below in block capitals, one word in each box.

Underline any words you require in caps.

7		
10		
13		
16		
19		
22		
22		
25		
28		
31		
34		

JOBS

The General Will, Bradford based touring socialist theatre group requires immediately two politically committed actress/singers. One to be a musician, piano essential and one driver essential. Must be prepared to live in Bradford apply to 25 Blenheim Rd., Bradford B.

Looking for a different sort of job? 'Up Against the Law' is looking for new people to work at its Kings Cross Law Centre, especially on the magazine side. Women with experience at the receiving end of the law, and women who've been involved in community papers or radical journalism are particularly welcome to apply. Due to circumstances beyond our control, certain changes are being made in the membership of the collective. Some of the old guard are going out to pasture for a well-earned rest. So we need new blood, people who are prepared to work for the aims of the collective. The work's hard, the pace is frantic and the money's bad.

Working here involves a bit of everything answering the phone, selling UPAL, taking witness statements, writing the mag, sorting out distribution, answering letters, etc. etc.

We regret that, at the moment, there are no vacancies for ego-trippers, power freaks or passengers. Anyone else is welcome. A whole new life is just a phone call away.

U.P.A.L. 11.30 - 6pm. Mon. - Fri. 66 York Way, London N1 01-837 4194.

'Up Against the Law' sells 5000 copies bi-monthly, is widely read by defendants, lawyers and even cops. Subscriptions to UPAL for 1 year are £6 to lawyers, professionals and the well heeled. £2.50 to those who can't afford £6. Subscribe now before it's too late.

PROJECT FOR GIRLS IN ST. PAULS BRISTOL are offering opportunities for experience in residential social work with girls between ages of sixteen and twenty-four. Full board and pocket money provided. 0272 421068.

Spare Rib badly needs a book-keeper with time and no need of money to keep our accounts books together. Experience up to trial balance stage would help. Please contact Rose Ades in writing.

COURSES

A FRESH START for women, over 21, with intelligence and persistence but no examination qualifications. IF YOU want full-time study (history, literature, psychology sociology, etc.) want to work with people, want a professional career, TAKE a 2-year Certificate Course (Council for National Academic Awards) or 1-year Foundation Course. **ADVICE** Apply NOW to Secretary (9) Hillcroft College, Surbiton, Surrey. Tel. 01-399 2688.

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY. M.A. in Sociology/Social History. The Department is now

offering an option in Women's Studies. "The Social Situation of the Sexes in Industrial Britain" as a component of the one-year taught M.A. course in Sociology and Social History. The course will focus on the methodological problems and theoretical progress in the study of the inter-relationship of patriarchy, the development of capitalism and of industrialization. Within this framework we shall look at economic, demographic and technological conditions, social relationships, the state and its agents, ideology and social movements from the 18th century to the present.

Applicants should note that this course represents one third only of the course requirements.

GROUPS

Is anyone in THE NORWICH AREA interested in starting a group. Contact Ann, 36a Cotman Rd.

IS THERE a WL GROUP in the EARLS COURT area? Alternatively if anyone's interested in forming a consciousness raising group please write Box No. 352.

ANY WL OR MIXED POLITICAL GROUPS IN LEEDS. Friends urgently needed. Box no. 351.

Harrow Socialist Women's group meets every Monday 8pm. Contact Jackie 204 3558, Sue 863 2294, Leonora 863 6089.

NEWCASTLE Women's Liberation group meets Tuesdays at 7.30pm at 78 Jesmond Rd.

Anyone interested in starting a Women's discussion group in the Holborn area on a Wednesday night please write to Sheril Berkovitch, West Central Arts Workshop, 23 Hand Court, High Holborn, London WC1.

GAY/BISEXUAL WOMEN GROUP IN CENTRAL LONDON Contact Janet Clarke, Chelic, Great Windmill St., W1 01-437 7363.

Worthing/Littlehampton Group. Contact Bobbie Begg Worthing 66125.

SERVICES

GAYWAY, your own personal gay dating service; totally discreet and here to help you find your right gay friend. Send first class stamp for details. You won't regret it. GAYWAY 77 Fortis Green Road, London N10.

Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies Highgate area. Tel. 01-348 5593.

Photodates you choose from hundreds SAE for free details CEI (SR) 3 Manor Road, Romford Essex

Female/female exclusive introductions highly confidential service for release, friendship liberation etc SAE - 'Lesbos and Ariadne' The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT

Homosexual women and men can ring Icebreakers on 01-274 9590 every evening of the year between 7.30 & 10.30 to talk over their problems with other gay people.

TRAVEL

ATHENS & EUROPE by coach from £19 Weekly departures. Phone 01-734 1127 Euro Express Lloyd Oxford Circus

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EVENTS

Australian Women's Films. A Festival of independent films and video from Australia includes films by Julie Gibson, Martha Kay, Gill Armstrong and others. April 25, 26, 27 Collegiate Theatre, Gordon St., WC1 (nr. Euston) Programme details/tickets (£1 for 3 days) from 15 Arundel Gardens W11. Tel. 01-727 8563 (evenings)

BOOKS ETC.

SAPPHO, the only lesbian feminist magazine in Europe. 40p inc. post. BCM/PETREL, London WC1 6XX. Meetings held every Tuesday, 7.30pm, upstairs room. The Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London W2. Off Westbourne Grove. 40p admission for non-subscribers.

SINGLE AND PREGNANT? What now? Marriage? Abortion? Adoption? Single parenthood? **SINGLE MOTHER?** What can you do about Money? Work? Housing? Coping day to day? For emotional guidance and practical help you need **THE SINGLE WOMAN'S GUIDE TO PREGNANCY AND PARENTHOOD** by Patricia Ashdown Sharp. A Penguin Book. 95p. Available from booksellers or by post from J. Barnicoat (Falmouth) Ltd., P.O. Box. 11, Falmouth, Cornwall - enclosing 15p extra for p & p.

Women's Liberation Literature or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H. Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

New Design WL Badge 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. postage) From Sisterhood Books c/o 22 Great Windmill St., London W1

ACCOMMODATION

Woman with baby requires similar to share and find flat. Write Tessa, B.M. Mushroom, WC1 6XX.

33 year old woman and 14 year old daughter needed rented accommodation in London or Midlands Box No. 353.

Charming Detached Georgian Cottage (2hrs London - ¼ hr Bristol/Bath) Consists Porch, Plant room, Hall, Cloakroom, Sitting room, Dining room Kitchen, Cellar, 3 Bedrooms, Bathroom & small garden overlooking surrounding countryside. 'Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucs. £16,250. Enquiries:- 01-278 1501.

Modernised Pied à Terre, WC1 Semi-basement. Bed sitter (Wall bed, fitted cupboards, carpets, curtains etc) Bathroom, kitchen/Pantry overlooking Plant area. Leasehold 36 years £10,750. Enquiries:- 01-278 1501

WOMAN SEEKS ROOM with nice people Camden/Islington preferred have cat, sense of humour. Please phone Rowena 01-607 2144 eves.

PERSONAL

Woman 22 needs new friends North London preferred Janet Box No. 354

Obedience to authority? writer seeks contacts with others who have experienced personal conflict with awry practices of systems: 'rank closing', abuse of power, protection of misused authority etc as research for book. Write 47 Long Mynd Road, Northfield, Birmingham B31 1HJ, in strictest confidence.

FOR SALE

Send SPARE RIB CARDS with women's centres listed on back. Pack of 10 with envelopes 40p from Sandra Oliver, 9 Northumberland Ave., London E12 5HF, or from Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St., W1.

STOP. You can now buy our super high quality micromesh TIGHTS at bargain prices. 12 pairs £1.95 + 15p post. One size American Tan. Mail order only from SNOOPY (SR) 96 Kepton Walk, Croydon.

APOLOGY

The photograph of the Women's Theatre Group production *My Mother Says I Never Should . . .* which appeared on page 41 of *Spare Rib* 34 should have been credited to Chris Davies (Report).

DISCRIMINATION IN THE FILM INDUSTRY

Two years ago, women in the Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians managed to persuade their union to look into discrimination against women in the industry.

In March the findings were published in a 60 page special report - *Patterns of Discrimination against Women in the Film and Television Industries*. Its proposals are not yet union policy; they were debated at the Annual Conference at Easter.

The report was produced by the union's Committee on Equality (nine women, one man) and Sarah Benton, employed as a researcher for nearly a year. It describes in detail what jobs women do, and what status and pay these jobs therefore have. It explains why women are virtually confined to these areas by a job structure that undervalues women's skills and refuses to recognise any domestic responsibilities, and also by attitudes and social images that limit women's expectations and endorse men's prejudices.

Sarah Benton prepared two questionnaires - one for freelancers, one for fulltime employees - with about thirty questions, such as what grades they had worked in, how much they earned, what type of programmes they were on, whether they had children and how they were looked after. These were sent out to 2,000 people, and over 1,000 replied. They were presumably unrepresentative in the sense that those who answered were far more likely to be active union members than those who did not.

She also went round "shops", handing the questionnaire to shop stewards and to women who were interested. Some people, particularly men in film, were suspicious of the survey, thinking it a waste of money - why bother about the position of women in the film industry when it was collapsing anyway.

The questionnaire also went to laboratories and colleges, and Sarah interviewed managers, shop stewards and as many women workers as possible. She used the ACTT journal to let women know what was going on. Once they knew, they started writing in with complaints

they had never thought it worth putting to the union. One had been refused maternity leave but knew a man who had been granted three months paid compassionate leave when his wife was ill.

In the 1930s the ACTT achieved equal pay in all grades. This report is interesting because it analyses the discrimination that continues after equal pay has been established, and proves that "Equal pay for work of equal value" is not an adequate demand.

Twenty years ago women were 18% of the union membership. Now they are only 15%. Twenty years ago they worked in a wide variety of grades. Now they work in almost complete sexual "ghettoes". During and just after the Second World War they had and took opportunities to work in skilled grades, but as the men returned from the forces, the women were steadily eased out. Opportunities became increasingly limited, and the division between men's work and women's work increasingly rigid.

Three out of five women now work in just three grades, in which there are virtually no men - as secretaries, production assistants and continuity "girls". In one of the largest laboratories, where grades are scaled from A to K, every employee in K is a woman. Only 5% of women are above grade D.

Promotion is rare in these grades, and slow for the few women in other grades, so most women are in dead-end jobs. Movement across is difficult too. One Personnel Manager said that women couldn't become graders because graders had to have worked in printing and printers had to have worked in drying, and there were no women driers in the lab.

So in spite of equal pay, most women earn much less than most men. Almost 50% of women in the industry earn less than £2,000 pa, while less than 25% of men do. 45% of men and only 17.5% of women earn over £3,000.

The report also has a critical attitude to the government's equal opportunity legislation: "They will only combat discrimination which results from and does not cause

women's inequality". It sees the cause in the sexual division of labour, the family, and the use of women as cheap "casual" labour. So it becomes important to "revalue" women's work, recognise women's skills as real skills, and so lessen differentials.

The report makes some very specific proposals: for equal pension rights, 26 weeks maternity leave and 4 weeks paternity leave, and creche facilities financed by the employer. Only one-third of the women in ACTT are married, but many of the two-thirds who are self-supporting have children, and three-quarters of the women in the survey said they would use a creche.

The most controversial proposal is for a 15% quota of women in each grade and on training courses, which are to be available for any job needing skills specific to the industry (15% is of course a minimum, not a norm). Up till now entry has been through the shop floor, personal contacts and/or technical general knowledge. Women tend not to apply for technical jobs because they know they will be rejected. Yet the report shows that a surprising number do apply, despite prejudice and lack of access to information.

Their desire to acquire new skills was indicated by the success of the Women's Film Workshop at the National Film School last November, reported in SR 32. (Of 25 fulltime students at the National Film School, only 5 are women, though in theory there is a non-discrimination policy. This year there were no women on the selection committee.) The ACTT would want to structure these workshops, so that they are not one-off feminist events, and so that the employer pays.

Employers will see the quota as a threat to their "right to hire and fire", so this proposal, the only one that *forces* change, is the most likely to be dropped along the way. However it could open new possibilities to women. It's backed up by proposals for nondiscriminatory job advertising, and full explanation from employers of their reasons for turning down unsuccessful applicants.

At the press conference to launch the report, the London Women's Film Group pointed out that it's often the case that one member of ACTT employs another. Just as it is too easy for employers to put their own direct discrimination down to "social conditioning", so it is too easy for the union to blame it all on the employers. Sexism must be

fought within the union, but at least ACTT is aware of this. The report is critical of the union and much franker than most union documents.

Women are under-represented in the ACTT. Committee members represent particular departments or sections. Women are in few departments or grades. So women committee reps are proportionately fewer. When they are committee officers, they usually take on a secretarial role. If women were represented in accordance with their numbers, one-sixth of all union reps would be women. But in 1973-4, of 156 shop stewards, only 9 were women. There are no women on the national executive.

To be effective the report must both become union policy and be agreed and acted upon at all levels. It suggests that subcommittees be set up in every shop "to investigate and discuss the position of women in a particular company, to ensure union policy on women is being carried out, and to discover ways of drawing more women into union activity". It also suggests an introductory pamphlet for women in the union. The Committee on Equality will go round with the report, explaining it and its recommendations.

The report is limited in that it doesn't deal with sexism in the content of the media, despite its constant reference to "conditioning". It hadn't the resources to do this properly; the annual conference would have to decide if it wanted to sponsor research into this. It does recommend that the union consider the Code of Practice on sexism in the media. Though attitudes and images must be challenged, this is really a question of control, clearly not in the hands of male workers either.

The report concludes: "Those who share in 'conditioning' men and women to sex roles - the media, advertisers, schools - will not suddenly stop putting over images of the perfect secretary, the perfect sex symbol; not only because the media do not see their role as changing social ideas, but also because the roles women have are, at present, necessary to the economy".

A union's recommendations cannot end discrimination against women, but they can begin to alter the structure of employment. They cannot move outside their own area - to the other women, such as cleaners, exploited so the industry can continue in its present form - or offer an alternative structure, as the London Women's Film Group tries to do. □

Jill Nicholls

JULIA MARGARET CAMERON

"My first lens was given to me by my cherished departed daughter and her husband, with the words, 'It may amuse you, Mother, to try to photograph during your solitude at Freshwater'," wrote Julia Margaret Cameron, the 19th century pioneer of portrait photography.

Aged 49 she turned her coal house into a darkroom and taught herself the complicated, messy photographic technique of the time. With her hands forever stained with chemicals, through trial, error and enthusiasm, she developed the out-of-focus pictures which became her hallmark. Virginia Woolf, her great niece, commented, "A camera gave her at last an outlet for the energies which she had dissipated in poetry and fiction and doing up houses and concocting curries and entertaining her friends."

She was the first of many remarkable women photographers. Perhaps having a woman amongst the first photographers helped women gain access to photography. Though, more to the point, photography was seen as craft rather than art and women had a tradition of activity within the crafts. Ironically, Julia Margaret Cameron wanted to make photography into High Art. Her soft focus portraits were a reaction against the realism of current photography.

She was a perfectionist. Sometimes she destroyed a hundred plates before achieving the effect she wanted. Disapproving of retouching, she was not even prepared to dot out spots on the prints. With a strong sense of the originality of her work, she signed them, dated them and assembled 94 portraits into an album. Yet she valued the democratic character of photography, "It gives pleasure to millions."

Her album is in danger of disappearing into private ownership in America. At the moment many of the photos are on loan to museums but last October the collection was sold at Sothebys in London to an American for £52,000.

An appeal has been launched to stop the photos being exported. £52,000 has to be raised by May 2. People are asked to send money to The Cameron Collection, c/o Drummonds Branch, Royal Bank of Scotland, 49 Charing Cross, London SW.□

Rosie Parker



"Sisters" by Julia Margaret Cameron

Common Market Referendum: Should Britain Stay In?

Jean Gardiner explores the arguments on both sides in the run-up to the Common Market referendum in June.



What is the EEC?

The European Economic Community is a political and economic association of nine Western European countries: the original six - France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg - and the three recent entrants - Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom.

It has two main strategies. One is the protection of EEC agricultural production from competition with lower cost food production elsewhere in the world by means of the Common Agricultural Policy. The other is the creation of large industrial companies that are strong enough to withstand and prosper from competition with American and Japanese companies by means of free movement of trade, capital and labour within the EEC.

Who supports Britain staying in the EEC?

The large multinational firms - both British and foreign - which operate in Britain support the EEC because they will benefit most from the free movement of trade, capital and labour between Britain and the other EEC countries. The EEC represents a large enough home market for consumer goods and investment goods, in a way that Britain does not, from which they can hope to challenge American and Japanese firms in world markets.

Also large firms stand to gain, relative to small firms, from intensified competition in which size determines ability to survive. Increased competition is also seen as a means of making unions more 'responsible' in the sense of forcing them to moderate their demands.

Financial companies are the other powerful group supporting the EEC. They see it as a potentially unified money market in which the City of London can assume the role of leading financial centre.

Who opposes Britain staying in the EEC?

Small business has opposed the EEC for the same reasons that large business has supported it. Small businesses stand to lose from freer foreign trade with EEC countries because they do not have the financial backing to withstand long competitive battles.

The most organised opposition to the EEC comes from the trade unions, although a sizeable minority of these may now support the Labour Government's renegotiated terms for staying in the EEC. The major unions which oppose the EEC are the transport workers, engineers, public employees, miners, and scientific, technical and managerial workers.

The unions oppose the EEC because of its effect on the cost of living. The Common Agricultural Policy is a dear food policy because it sets prices to consumers at a level which reflects the highest cost EEC agricultural production rather than the lowest cost world production.

In addition the unions oppose the EEC because it will reduce the influence the British trade union movement can have on government policy in areas such as state inter-

vention in industry, coal, steel, nuclear energy, transport, indirect taxation, agriculture and fisheries, and movement of labour and capital. It will therefore make it more difficult to implement left labour policies, eg worker/state control of industrial investment and foreign trade.

Isn't it true that our food prices would have gone up anyway without the EEC?

Britain's entry into the EEC in 1973 certainly occurred at a time of rapidly rising world food prices. It is true therefore that our food prices would have risen anyway during these years. But the crucial difference that membership of the EEC makes is that as world food prices fall, as they are now beginning to, our food prices will remain at their new higher level, thus preserving backward European agriculture.

The Common Agricultural Policy however only maintains high prices for those agricultural products produced within the EEC. In negotiations with food producers who do not directly compete with EEC producers - mostly Third World producers of tropical foodstuffs such as

coffee and cocoa - the Common Market attempts to establish the lowest price. The EEC thus combines high prices for its food, the bulk of which is produced internally, and exploitation of Third World producers.

What about the claim that the EEC is a modern dynamic economic community?

From what has been said about the Common Agricultural Policy it is obvious that EEC agriculture is far from modern and dynamic. As far as industry is concerned it is true that there has been rapid growth of production and investment in the EEC during the post-war period.

But the nature of this dynamism can only be appreciated if we go on to ask who has benefitted from it. Because the growth is unplanned and profit-oriented, the major beneficiaries have been the large firms that have been able to make very high profits. Such growth leads to increasing discrepancies between the level of economic development in different geographical areas, eg industry has prospered in West Germany and stagnated in Italy.



But won't Britain benefit to some extent from the economic prosperity that other members of the EEC have experienced?

There are a number of reasons for supposing that Britain's relative economic stagnation, which began well before entry to the EEC, will become reinforced rather than alleviated by remaining within it. In the first place as far as exports are concerned there is a clear trend towards British firms losing out in the heightened trade competition with other EEC countries.

Between 1973 and 1974 - the first year of EEC-membership - Britain's trade deficit in manufactures with the original six EEC countries nearly doubled, whilst a trade surplus in manufactures with the rest of the world was actually increased. This deterioration in the export performance of British firms since entry into the EEC results from tariff considerations: the general level of tariffs on British imports from the EEC was higher than on EEC imports from Britain. Thus the removal of tariffs has had a relatively adverse effect on British exports.

The second factor concerns investment. The effect so far of entry into the EEC has been some increase in the flow of British capital into European property and no significant rise in European investment in the UK. Britain's entry into the EEC has done nothing so far to make industrial investment in Britain more attractive to international business. It is more likely to have made investment elsewhere in Europe more attractive to British business. But whatever the effects so far EEC membership undoubtedly rules out any systematic attempt by a British government to plan investment in Britain and control the outflow of capital, since this would contravene EEC regulations.

Thirdly, there is the question of Britain's contribution to the EEC budget. Every year Britain has to make payments into the EEC funds, mostly in connection with the Common Agricultural Policy. Britain contributes a lot more to these funds than she receives back, being a net importer of food. The money collected in import levies on food purchased by Britain outside the EEC goes to EEC food producers. It subsidises their export at low price of products for which a surplus exists in the EEC countries, eg the recent export of surplus butter (which EEC residents could not afford to buy at the very high domestic price) to the USSR at subsidised prices.

Thus, far from Britain receiving

assistance from the more prosperous countries of the EEC in order to tackle its economic problems, it is actually forced to contribute to EEC funds an amount in excess of what it receives back, an amount which is out of proportion with its dwindling national income.

But shouldn't we be supporting attempts at international co-operation?

The only form of international co-operation the EEC represents is co-operation amongst Western European big business to make their industries more profitable by means of merger and rationalisation (closing down the less profitable plants). It entails increased competition between the workers in different countries as they are set against each other in the fight to preserve jobs and investment.

It is often argued that the EEC will force the British trade union movement to co-operate more with trade union movements abroad, and therefore will be a healthy antidote to British nationalism and chauvinism. Yet if Britain is outside the EEC, trade unions can work to build international links more easily because European employers will be less well organised.

Just as the EEC is far from representing harmony and co-operation for the peoples of Western Europe it is clearly divisive on a world scale. A striking example of this is what happened in the last year over Britain's supplies of cane sugar from Third World Commonwealth countries.

When the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement - by which Britain had enjoyed a guaranteed supply of cheap sugar - ran out in 1973, the producing countries were unwilling to renew the agreement at the low price being offered by Britain and the EEC compared to the world price. For example, in November 1974 the EEC were offering £126 a ton whilst the world price was at £630 a ton.

The price (£260 a ton) which the sugar producers finally accepted at the beginning of February 1975 would undoubtedly have been higher had not the EEC both threatened to veto further British purchases of Commonwealth sugar and agreed temporarily to subsidise British purchases of sugar from the world market to force the hand of the Commonwealth producers.

Despite the anti-market stance of organisations like the National Front and the extreme right-wing of the Tory Party who are known to be hostile to the people of the Third World, the EEC works against the interests of those people.

Surely multinational companies rule our lives these days whether we're inside or outside the Common Market? What difference does it make to the control we have over our lives?



It is undeniable that multinationals, because of their political right to carry out investment strikes and throw the entire economy into disarray, are the most powerful section of British society. However, they do not always have everything their own way, as the recent success of the trade unions in getting the Labour Government to repeal the Industrial Relations Act shows.

Of course voting every four or five years, or even once a year, for a Labour or a Tory government does not give us genuine democracy, in the sense of popular control. However, we do have a political system that gives organised groups like trade unions and women's organisations scope to pressurise government and win reforms. Although reforms alone do not change the basic power structure of our society, in the struggle for them new forms of grass roots organisation may be thrown up which give people the confidence to fight for more fundamental changes.

The transfer of power from local to central government level that has occurred with legislation like the Housing Finance Act has made it harder for people to organise resistance to retrogressive changes because such organisation has become larger and nationally based. (For example the Clay Cross tenants' and councillors' resistance to rent rises failed because it was isolated).

The transfer of power increasingly to a central EEC level will create even greater problems at a community and workplace level given both the size of the EEC and the widely differing material conditions and cultural traditions within the EEC. For example the Common Agricultural Policy, by preserving backward agriculture, preserves conservative rural votes in many areas.

If monetary union in the EEC were achieved in the long term, a very

high proportion of state spending would get decided centrally. This would mean, for example, that campaigns such as the women's movement demand for nurseries would stand very little chance of succeeding unless there were a highly organised and unified campaign throughout the EEC.

Surely now we're in the EEC we'd put ourselves in a worse mess if we came out because we'd be in total isolation.

Despite the terms renegotiated by the Labour Government, which embody merely minor concessions of a more or less temporary nature, the EEC makes it more difficult to plan and democratically control the use of our resources. It makes us more vulnerable to the ruthless competition of the world market and to manipulation by the multinationals. This is because it prevents us developing defences, eg planned import and export of goods and services and of capital.

An alternative to the EEC strategy, including such measures, has not yet been clearly worked out and inevitably poses many problems. For example, Britain's dependence on imported food and raw materials would force us to negotiate trade agreements and expose us to adverse political pressure from countries like the USA.

But however difficult the alternatives, the possibility within the EEC of developing a strategy to overcome Britain's economic crisis, which is not at the expense of the working people, seems even more remote. The EEC is a recipe for passivity rather than a call to action for people in Britain to take part in creating a better society for themselves and the other peoples of the world. □

PACIFIST CAMPAIGN

Three women pacifists face imprisonment. Wendy Butlin, Juliet Hornsby and social worker Gwyn Williams are among 14 pacifists facing sentences of up to life for conspiracy under the Incitement to Disaffection Act (1934). After a successful appeal, Pat Arrowsmith was released from her 18 month sentence last December.

The Defend the 14 campaign is holding a public meeting on May 3 from 2pm at NUFTO Hall, Jockey's Fields, London WC1 (near Red Lion Square), chaired by Joan Maynard with sundry speakers and a theatre group. Support and donations always welcome, to Box 69, c/o 197 Kings Cross Road, WC1, or phone 837-9794 (afternoons). □

Info...Odds & Sods...Advice

Co-operative baby-care

I am unmarried, 23 years old, bisexual, and I want to have a child. I have been married, briefly and disliked it intensely. I would not like to be married again, and in fact I don't think I function very well in any intense long term marital relationship. I wouldn't want to go out to work and leave the child in someone else's care since this for me would defeat the object of having it. And I don't fancy grovelling to the DHSS for a bread line type allowance.

Are there any women who feel as I do who would be interested in setting up a co-operative household in which those who like having jobs would have jobs and support those who liked caring for children?

This seems to me the ideal solution to all the hassles experienced by single mothers. I feel as though marriage is the price society expects me to pay for the privilege of rearing a child - and to me it is a privilege. Sometimes I think what the hell. I'll get pregnant anyway and then worry about how I'll manage, but I don't feel that I could face the wrathful disapproval of society. So I now find myself in the absurdly anomalous situation of using contraceptives and hoping they fail. I seem to induce guilt in myself whichever way I turn and the only answer seems to be the communal household I outlined above.

Will anyone join me?
Yours in struggle,
Sue Spicer
c/o Gay Community Centre
78 Railton Road
London SE24.

Name Change

I am writing to you in the hope that you can help me with a problem. No one seems to be able to tell me if I can revert back to my maiden name officially when I get my decree absolute. Can I have my Insurance Cards, Passport, P45, Bank Account and everything else changed to my original name? I do hope so. Thank you for being there. It's great.
Love, Jude
Cosham
Portsmouth.

* For most things like Bank Accounts etc you can call yourself what you like without going through any official procedure. Passports and possibly some similar documents require a statutory declaration, a simple document stating the proposed name change which must be signed by a lawyer. If children are involved the situation is slightly more complicated. To change a child's name the father's consent is required, and it is preferable to change the name by deed poll. This involves a more formal document which has to be signed by a High Court, and a couple of other

forms which relate to the father's consent explaining, if it has not been given, why this is so. There is a useful book called *Change of Name* by J.F. Josling in the series *O Yez Practice Notes* which explains all these forms in detail. It costs about 75p, and you can obtain it from Law Centres, or the Law Stationary Bookshop, 1 Chancery Lane WC2. Some large bookshops may have it too.

Derby Group

The first women's liberation group in Derby has been founded. We are only five, but hope that by doing a bit of publicising the group will extend. Our first meeting took place in a pub in Derby and we believed we'd better meet informally like this, until the time is ripe for "organising" the group.

The group was born after a public meeting on behalf of International Women's Year. The five of us felt rather unhappy about the meeting, as most of the committee members and most of the women who came to the meeting had no interest in Women's Liberation as we would define it. So, to get away from what we thought was narrow-mindedness, we decided to meet, hoping we could form a group together.

I am rather happy about this new founded group and I hope that readers of *Spare Rib*, located in Derbyshire will contact us.

Yours,
Liv Ingerd Milsom
(On behalf of the group)
8 Hazel Drive,
Spondon,
Derby DE2 7DS.

Women's Centres

Since doing a small amount of work at the Peace Centre in Birmingham, I have been wondering whether to write to you about the fact that Birmingham has no Women's Centre. This is incomprehensible in a city the size of Birmingham. Other smaller towns and cities seem to be much better off in this respect. I notice that Bristol has a very helpful set-up for women with a large number of different groups and organisations all meeting under one roof who can presumably all give each other help and support. This must be a great help especially to isolated women and women in distress who can go along and get help and information from many different people.

I know there are several groups in Birmingham but they meet all over the place and it's very difficult to run them to earth. I'm sure half of them don't know

the other half exists and a great many women don't know about any of them. Yet these isolated women may well be the ones who need the support of other women most of all.

At an established women's centre all these groups could meet and more easily attract new members and many new groups could come into being if there was a need for them. Women attending one group could realise the wide range of activities and alternatives offered, and many more women would be drawn into groups, working with women and for women, and helping themselves at the same time. This would also be a good place for pressure groups to meet and gain support from all women.

How do women go about setting up and financing a women's centre and how do they run? Can anything be done?

Sheila Hughes
174 Corisande Road
Sellyoak
Birmingham 29.

Sue Sharpe, who has been involved in co-ordinating women's groups in London writes: "In London the ways in which new women find out about local groups and communication between groups is still a problem. To try to resolve this, a meeting was held last November where over 40 groups talked about their activities. A card index was compiled for future contact.

"From this meeting several areas decided to maintain local contact. In North East London, for instance, groups around the Hackney and Islington area decided to hold monthly open meetings at Essex Road Women's Centre. Responsibility for organising this is rotated between groups. These are publicised for any women joining groups and also for groups to come and exchange information on campaigns and activities. The meetings have been held since January (on the first of every month at 2.00 pm) and have been fairly successful. A few new women have come each time and we have tried to match their particular needs and interests with the groups available. It has also succeeded as a forum for ideas and personal contact.

However, we have not yet solved the problem of how to pay for the cost of the regular mailing, not how best to reach women.

NB. Birmingham Women's Liberation publish a newsletter of which 400 copies are now being made, and it contains group reports from all the different groups in Birmingham. The contact address for the collective is 37 Trafalgar Road, Moseley, Birmingham. The newsletter collective holds meetings at this address every Monday at 8 pm. We have also heard of a community centre which is being started by a group of eight students. Their address is Community Action Office, Edgebaston Park Road, Birmingham 15, tel 472 1841 extension 25.

Women's Theatre

As a College of Education drama student and a member of the Women's Liberation Movement, I feel it might be useful to start a Women's Theatre in Education Workshop in this area. The purpose of which would be primarily to visit local secondary schools and present dramatised anti-sexist material to the kids to promote discussion with them.

Are there other Women's Groups in other areas experimenting in a similar field? If so could you supply their addresses for contact? Also could you suggest any literature which might be useful in this context? If not we'll have to write our own which demands a skill I'm not sure we have.

Yours hopefully,
Heather Lowe,
5 Peel Street,
Spring Bank,
Hull.

The Octagon Theatre Bolton Theatre in Education group produced a play called *Sweetie Pie*, and I am told that it would be very suitable for what you want to do. Copies of it will be published in May by Ayre Methuen. Also, copies of all Michelene Wandor's plays and two plays by Dinah Brooke have recently been published in pamphlet form under the title "Sink Songs". You can obtain them for 45p post free if you write to Michelene at 71 Belsize Lane, NW3. You could also write to the Women's Theatre Group, who are taking their recent play "My Mother Said I Never Should" round schools and colleges. Write c/o Mica, 29 Netherhall Gardens, London NW3.

DIRT AND MACHINES

Positive benefits have obviously come from the development of domestic appliances in this country. They can make housework faster, easier and a lot less back-breaking, but it is not the prime concern of the manufacturers that we should spend less time and worry on housework. Their advertising campaigns manipulate attitudes towards housework, by playing on fears and feelings of inadequacy to convince women of the need for yet more equipment. "Whose wash is the whitest?" creates competition between women and urges us to see an empty machine as a silent reproach, reminding us that we could always be achieving a higher standard of cleanliness. This kind of manipulation is by no means a recent development. The marketing of early 20th century household appliances to the middle classes reveals a great deal about past anxieties and attitudes, as well as explaining the strength of today's sell.

The marketing of household appliances towards the end of the 19th century was largely achieved by trading on middle class attitudes towards dirt. While there is no doubt that with the growth of cities and a massive increase in domestic consumption of coal, life got a lot dirtier, it is also true that people became even more anxious about dirt. The dirt which settled in the homes of the middle class came from they knew not where, but as likely as not in the middle class imagination, from the slums carrying germs and disease. The germ theory of infection became known to the public from about 1890, and fear of dirt became a way of rationalising middle class anxiety about class stability and of providing a physical justification for the difference between classes. Dirt was seen to be contagious, but the act of removing it also carried danger of social contamination. Cleaning up was thought of as servants' work. For a middle class woman to get her hands dirty was a double risk: she herself was in danger of contagion from the dirt, but her role was also in danger of being insufficiently distinguished from that of her working class servant.

Fortified by hygiene education in secondary schools — itself the product of the public health movement — and the strength of the Non-Conformist conscience (Cleanliness is next to Godliness), the removal of dirt became a moral crusade with middle class women as the ministering angel (Plate 1). The coming of electricity provided a miraculous aid to the problem.

Not only did electricity have invisible and magical properties (Plate 2), but also it had the virtues of being totally hygienic and socially non-polluting (Plate 3), and so was the ideal energy source to assist woman in her war on dirt (or indeed, as the advertising implied, to take over the battle from women).

Adrian Forty

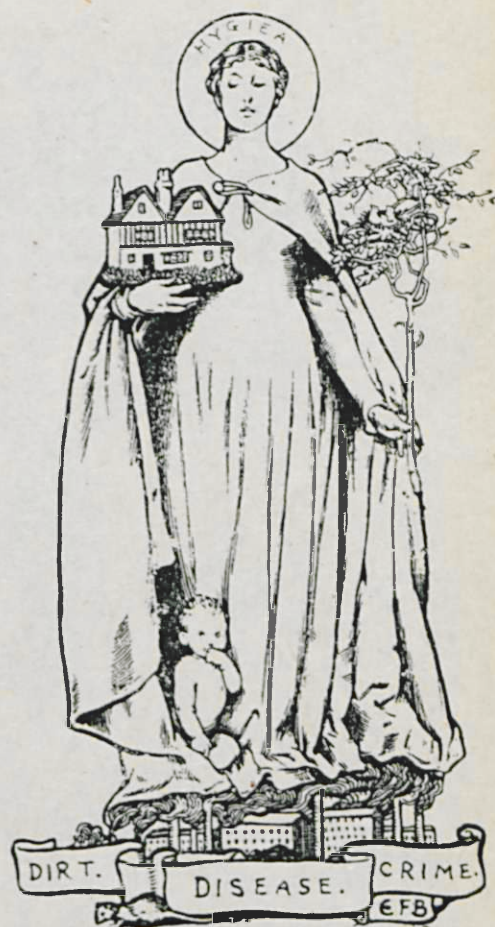


Plate 1



"FANCY COOKING CUTLETS AND FRYING PANCAKES WITH CAPTURED LIGHTNING! IT REALLY SEEMS TREMENDOUS . . . YOU WOULD HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE EXQUISITE CLEANLINESS OF THE PROCESS."—*Truth*.

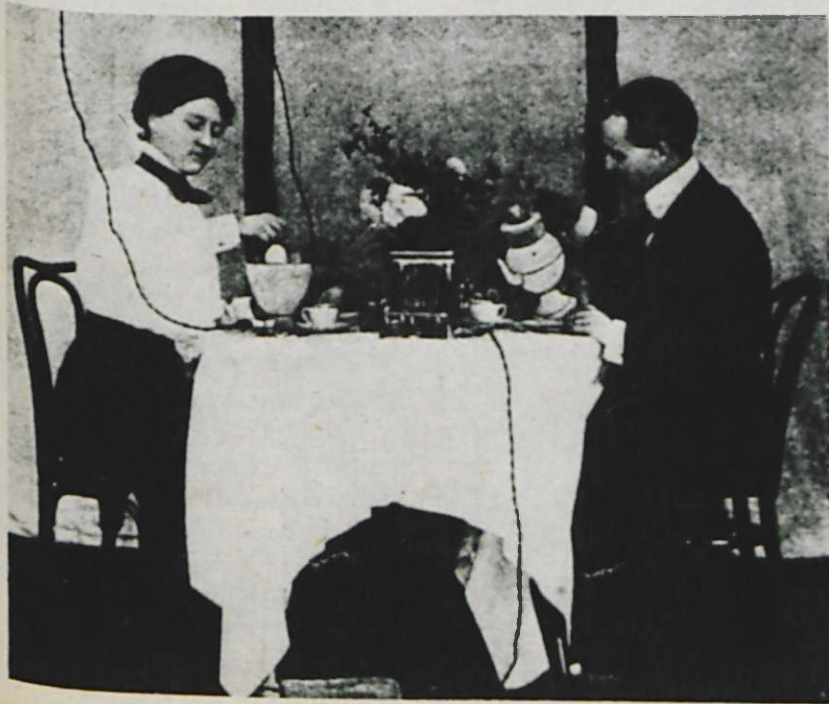


Plate 2 Breakfast in the Electric Home



Plate 5 Washerwomen in about 1870.

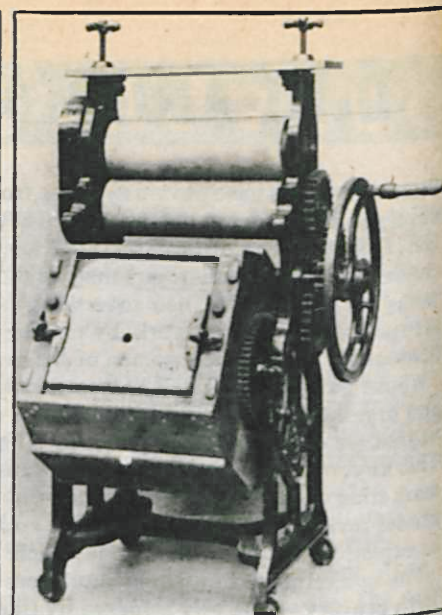


Plate 4 A manual washing machine of about 1857.

From now on, even I can do the washing

The Bendix is not only the most labour-saving v also the kindest to your clothes. "Tumble action" gently it lifts and drops your clothes into and out

of times.

clean water

dirt. Clo

freshness, a

are not b

BENDIX I

you can

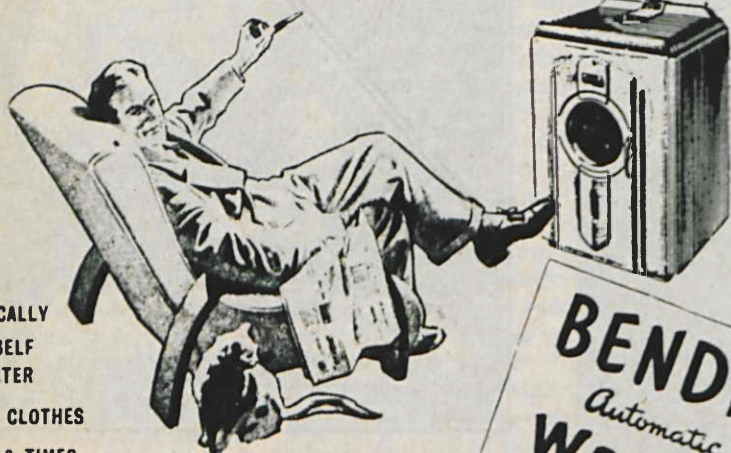
DIX,

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AUTOMATICALLY
FILLS ITSELF
WITH WATER

WASHES 9 LB. CLOTHES
WASHES THEM 3 TIMES

LEAVES THEM DAMP DRY

AND DRAINS ITSELF

ITCHES ITSELF OFF

H.P. TERMS TO SUIT EVERY POCKET

BENDIX
Automatic
Washer

WASHING MACHINES

Plate 4 In the crusade against dirt, washing machines were a major item of tactical equipment. Manual washing machines were developed from the 1850's but did not significantly lessen the amount of work women put into washing although they enabled the washer to avoid handling the wash.

Plate 3 By the 1930's the application of electricity enabled the washing to become a fully automatic process in which no contact with the dirt was necessary apart from loading the washing into the machine. Even a man could take over supervision of the washing, because reduced to a mere spectator there was no danger of him becoming involved in the supposedly feminine and dirty activities of the washing process.

Plate 3



Plate 7



Plate 10 A Hand-worked Vacuum Cleaner

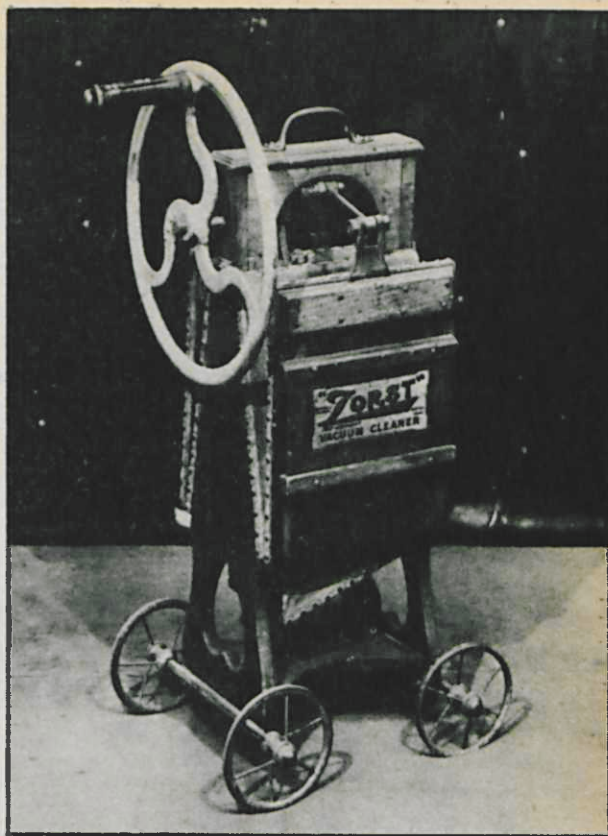


Plate 9 A zorst bellows action vacuum cleaner of about 1850.

VACUUM CLEANERS

Plate 7 Vacuum cleaners were developed originally both to improve on the brushing of carpets by hand, and also to reduce the chance of human contact with socially-degrading dirt.

The constant theme of vacuum cleaner advertising has been that it is the machine that does the work. The operator is treated as remote, while the machine undertakes the risks of contamination. We are never shown a woman carrying a machine or emptying it.

Plate 9 and 10 There were manually operated suction cleaners on the market from the 1850's. Plate 10 shows a machine on the market from 1910 called "Daisy" to identify it with a woman servant. ●



An Exe in

I met Penny Wright when I was visiting my family in the States last summer. Several months before the alumni magazine of the university in my home town had published an article about my films. Penny was the editor with whom I had correspondence and, since I was very pleased with the results, I called her when I got home and we arranged to have lunch.

During the meal we talked about the other "work" that I do — I put "work" in quotation marks because I haven't found a convenient description for it. It is a form of therapy or teaching using techniques from a collection of sources: gestalt therapy, encounter, astrology, cabalistic methods, exercises I've learned from Dr Thomas Maughn, my own clairvoyance, and anything else that seemed useful.

Without either of us making the decision consciously this work began to go on at that meal. We then arranged to meet regularly while I was around, usually twice a week, and finally, when I left to return to England in September, we decided to try to continue the process by correspondence.

Our work during the summer had been concentrated on two major topics — love and power. That's not what I started to write, I was going to say something about Penny being a lesbian and her problems with her family, her Mother especially. But after trying to find the right phrases and remembering some of our conversations I realise that love and power are the forces which best describe the source of her fear and, I think, the qualities she is aspiring towards. She is becoming a powerful and loving woman. Following is a selection from our correspondence. Before leaving the States I had given Penny a series of exercises to do and a list of subjects to write about. Penny has just returned from a visit to her family, whom she had not seen since she had revealed to them that she was a lesbian:

Sept 3rd

Dear Anne,

Here's the stuff I've done since you left. It's been quite a month for me. My visit home was different and harder than I'd expected, but it turned out really well. By the time I left my mother was hugging and kissing me and saying she was glad I'd come, wanting me to come again. What happened in and after the bad place in the visit, where we struggled and cried, gives me some confidence that my consciousness has changed some, not just my conscience. I mean: it wasn't just that I knew better than to do the things that would make things worse, I didn't *feel* like doing them.

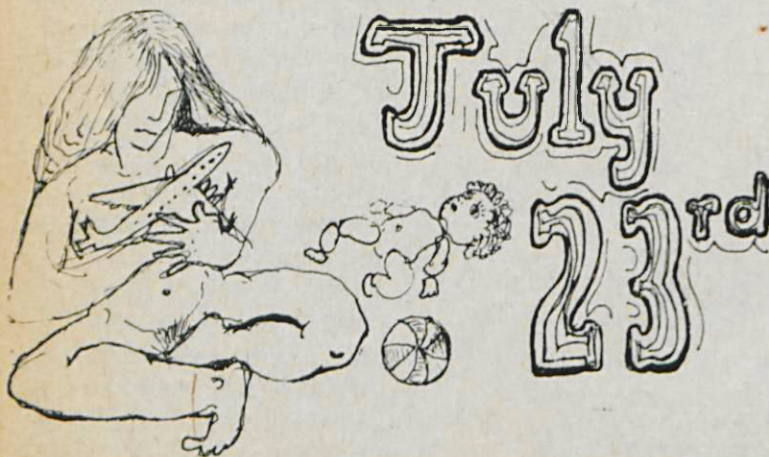
So I'm feeling in pretty good shape, a little chastened off and on but generally OK. Well, I'll get this off. I'd like to hear from you, hear about your adventures of the last month, how your work is coming and how you're finding England. Later then,

Love
Penny.

when it doesn't make me happy. Sometimes it does and that's why I try to keep at it, and I think I will keep at it. But if this misery doesn't dissolve or resolve itself pretty soon you can go fuck yourself with this damnable self-transformation. If I wanted to be wise for itself it might be worth it but since what I want to be is happy and come to think of it I can't be happy without being at least a little wise, the way I felt last night and the way I feel today doesn't feel like the right path, but I can't seem to make it go away by willing. I slept I woke lay in bed and fretted but was kind to myself and didn't or tried to not feel guilty about that, got up walked a bit dressed came to work was kind didn't force myself to go through my whole routine. But I still feel vicious and miserable and close to tears. On my walk I kicked a plum as hard as I could. Fruit not tree. I'm going to write one more time at least, I must do this for myself. I mean, one more time for you to see. I feel better this morning about the work you gave me to do last night, I know I can do that, I look forward to it even with a sort of depressed satisfaction, like crossword puzzles.

You kissed me goodbye. It was very sweet and your lips were wonderful. But do you think you were kissing me, my mouth, my needs and confusions. Or do you think you were kissing your pupil, making a demonstration for me? Or do you think about that, or only of what pathetic romantic fantasies you imagine me to be caught up in when I wanted to kiss your hand, all I had to hold and indeed all I wanted to. I feel furious with you. My choice is whether to be a target, yours is whether to carry any weapons and self-deluding weapons at that. A demonstration for your pupil: the first time and I expect one of the not too many times, you charm me out of it every time. I felt really hard toward you when you said with so much satisfaction: "I kiss my women friends, on the mouth, with love. And I'm not a lesbian!" I said: "if you were you wouldn't." I thought: you smug bitch.

You started to tell me about a hard time, because I pressed you. Your face reddened and the skin contracting, the tears started to spill tears slid. You were so beautiful and I felt your beauty in my mouth and my right cheek. I felt enormous affection for you and enormous gratitude that you were willing to suffer through that



You want to be wise, but I want to be happy. It's very hard for me to tolerate this stirring up and rearranging and picking myself apart

Exercise Trust



experience out loud again because I asked you. Your hand was in my hand already, all ready, your hand was that part of you I thought I could touch freely, wholly. I think there was even some part of that kiss that wanted clumsily to comfort, in case the pain was too much, it was the most I'd seen in your face and felt in your hands. I don't think there was a fantasy between me and you just then, Anne. But there was something between you and me. Your voice "That's a funny way to kiss someone", was cold through the middle of that kiss, like a doorbell in lovemaking or a thoughtless hand turning off a radio in the middle of your favorite song. Are those fantasies? Fantasia interruptus. You've tripped me and trapped me and pursued me in my confusions and contradictions like the hardest nosed meta-physical distract attorney, and I've gotten irritated and frustrated and angry but it hasn't festered. But that interrupted kiss did, because it was the only time I felt you rejected me.

I want to try to say everything I feel about this once and for all. At least once and for all for now. Because that hasn't happened when we talked about it, or I wouldn't still be bothered by it. I read over what I wrote all ready to see if there are any phrases missing, any bits of pus I'm hanging onto. I can't find the holes, but something's wrong. Or something's not right. There's no laughter in me and the love's all murky, the love for you's all murky with resentment at what seems to me your arrogance. And the love I feel for other people seems so far away still and dormant I can't reach it. They can't reach me, I can't plug into its power.

But I think it's out now about the kiss. Fuck that kiss — I wish it hadn't been. I wish I hadn't felt like doing it. Instructive little rush of love though. I have to learn to love in other ways if I'm going to love at all. Damn. The anger keeps swelling up I think I've got it neutralised and it expands like a wave in my chest and thins the sunlight. Damn it I think I have fucked it up after all. I can't work it out and you can't help me. I try to ask what it does for me and all it does is all I can see is my stomach is messed up I'm weeping in public and I can't meet my deadlines at the office and I want to get back. Judy's visit I was looking forward to it so its like dust I don't see how I'm going to be able to concentrate on her I can't concentrate on any thing. The anger shrinks and swells but I think the words are all out now except one thing which I'll do.

It was important to get all the words down to the last redundant curse. I don't want them to live in my mind anymore I want to be alone. The last thing that I can remember that buzzed there this morning that I haven't written is that it really is ok for you to go. That sounds silly I mean of course it's ok but it's also ok with me. I am anxious to see the photographs I made of you, if there was enough light to register at all. It was quite a range. Your face is so changeable.

The words are all down now, no there's another thing, you told me your cousin was stupid but she seemed smarter than me to me. Do you tell her she's wonderful too, do you patronise her too? I know I know I know all this damned raging anger is projection, I patronise people, I manipulate people too. But I don't set myself up as a teacher.

Anne. Anne. I feel sick and frightened. I stopped awhile, read what I wrote again, chatted with Barbara the anger bled away again leaving just confusion and an ashy mouth. I thought of, almost decided to, call you, I may yet, to ask you to see me again, to help me dissolve this anxiety. Then I thought: is all this anxiety so I can see her

again? I don't know, but I tried to imagine how it could help. Besides your dear presence. Your presence *is* dear to me you know, but whether I see you once more or not I have to accept that I won't see you again for at least a year. Besides just being near you one more time, I could ask you to read this, I could watch you, I could wait for your questions. "What does it do for you Penny what does it do for you?"

Ah. Ah. What does it do for you Anne, to believe I kissed not your hand but mine. It was your hand. The love was for you, not for my fantasy lover. It still is. There'll be another chance to kiss. There will, but there needn't be, it doesn't need body, it's all whole now.

July 24th

Yesterday was some kind of nadir for me. I was glad to see the sun rise this morning. And rise it did beautifully.

I had an uncomfortable conversation with Nan last night that put some thoughts into motion, added to the swirl. Anyway, one of the things that came out in the course of the argument and the calmer after-hysterics discussion is her concern that what I'm going through is a transference/rejection process.

We have three interpretations now, any of which with a little patting and shaping can be fitted to my behaviour and mental state of the last few days.

You interpret that behaviour, as I understand it, as my projection on to you of an ideal lover set I carry around with me. Which includes elements of an ideal self, which is a fascinating idea by the way, I've been thinking about it a lot as my mind has been clearing. Nan's interpretation is that I've transferred my feelings, love feelings for my mother to you, and am now, or at least was yesterday, suffering from the equivalent of the therapist's withdrawal from that role.

My own interpretation is that I was bubbling and simmer sweetly still with a little more realistic love than that. Those interpretations make sense and I'm sure their colours tinge and to some extent confuse my affection for you.

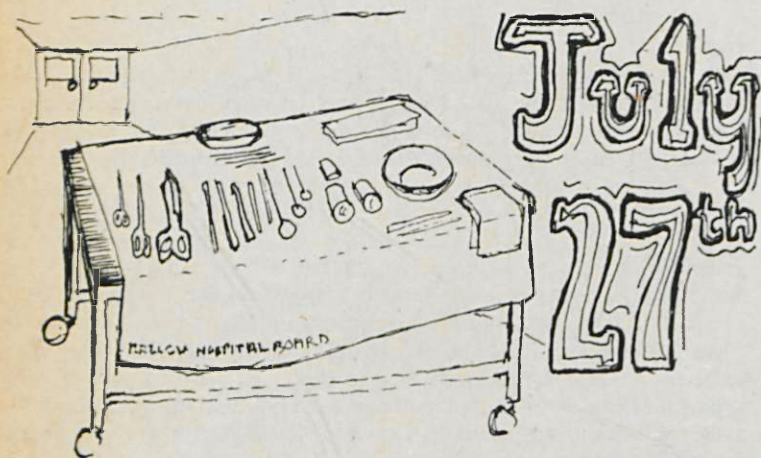
July 26th

Did you tell me you'd call before you left town? If so, why didn't you?

If not I've been feeling angry with you unfairly off and on the last couple of days. However if that reason hadn't been there I think I'd have found another one. Apparently I have some use for the anger. I've been trying to ferret out what. Some sort of screen I can't see behind yet, screen of bombast and adrenalin.

I'm feeling foxy this morning because my sister Karen called last night and it was wonderful, Anne. She loves me, I love her, and for the first time in many years I don't think either of us was afraid of what the other would say. Neither of us was a target, you would say. She called for an anxious reason, to tell me Mama has to go in for another biopsy this weekend, and to see if I'd call home Sunday. I will. Karen and I are at least through the patch and come through still with hands to hold. ▷

There was a small dream this morning that delighted me. I was dreaming I was with a group of people in a car, I think my parents were there, driving from one place to another in town and chatting. There was a blonde woman I didn't recognise whom I found very charming and was impressed with, she was friendly and articulate. I was looking at a magazine and saw an ad or a story about some kind of little mitts to put on babies to chain their hands to their cribs while they sleep. How horrible I said, that's worse than those little leashes you see on children in stores sometimes. Well you know what the chain mitts are for don't you said the blonde lady. No I said regretfully thinking perhaps I'd spoken too soon. Well she said and very kindly, those are for babies that get into their shit when they sleep and smear it around; the mitts keep them from getting it on their faces. Anyway it's only Cancer babies that you have that trouble with. I was silent and probably looked properly horrified but I was secretly thinking Aha! The not-self, and that exactly what I get to be. This morning when I woke up and thought about the dream I was amused and thought there's no reason I should project my shit-fantasies on all those innocent cancers. That's the self all right. There are things I can do about that though. When we finish the carpentry work on our wiring job there'll be lots of nice painting to do. How I love to paint, paint and paint with white white paint, it satisfies so many needs at once!



My sister is to call me today to tell me how mother's operation turned out. There was another lovely light place in the cloudscape this morning translucent gold glowing into bluey white right near the brow of the hill, my horizon. I am getting better at feeling myself on "the map". On the globe, or as much of it as I know somewhat. I stared at the light place where the sun was coming, felt the sun shining already in eastern Oregon, understand now why it's later there, since it's already been time there. And Mama is in the hospital there.

One of my unrequited loves said once 'I'm like Yuri Zhivago my eyes are constantly brimming with tears but the words seldom come.' So am I, and I brim whenever I go home to my sweet scarred country. And I went on home to my sweet scarred Mama. No going to the house this morning no big platter of bacon and eggs and coffee no cheerful mommy when I arrive with my crazy friends at four in the morning. In the hospital she is anaesthetized on a table, the doctor is waiting examining his tools. She is neatly covered all in white not the head though I can't see her face because the back of her head is to me, her dark hair. Her body though all is covered, except for an open square over her left breast. There is so little of it anyway. She looks small, quiet and helpless. I wait with Karen and daddy. They have had too much to drink and it feels like finals week. On the phone last night: mother wasn't drunk, she was the strongest, and it's her body, I don't care if she did make her own cancer she didn't know that, it's her body that's going crazy after being quiet so long. Go well Mama go well Mama sleep well wake well all go on.

Aug 1st



It's almost exhausting to think of all I want to say. Perhaps I'll work some in the office tomorrow. My column is finished, I'll be alone there. You are here in my writing Anne did you notice? Oh since I remind myself I wanted to tell you my mother is all right! There'll only be a little dent in the left breast, apparently there's no malignancy. So maybe it's through. You're back in my mind as I write, strange floating and questioning face, dear teacher. It doesn't seem natural or necessary to try and separate you now. The anger seems to have spent itself in the last flashes of hostility in the last letters, my affection and attachment for you are clear, warm, move gently like lake swells lapping against the insides of my ribs when I think of you.

Tonight the wind is in my willow tree, I saw my willow tree. I walked to my tree. My voice was going in the back of my mind; it felt my body moving without it and was delighted, started describing, started writing, some rather good turns of phrase, too, but I have forgotten what I said. I was remembering briefly what I learned from the small willow a few blocks from here and what I learned from not having learned from my backyard willow. I was under my willow, walking under my willow. Its long green cascades of leaves were lifting and swaying around me, they would brush me, trail over me so gently so freely. I stood still and looked at the still trunk and the great convoluted branches, we stood together, I was small, solid and strong. The long tresses of leaves rocked and danced around the quiet branched body of the tree, and my hair, my hair. My arms lifted, I saw my beautiful hands and forearms and felt them in the sun, small warm brown substantial spaces in the wind, and my hair lifted against them, and the long windbrushed hair of the tree blew over them and into the and around them, brushed my upper arms my ribs and flanks, blew leafy green with my brown hair.

As I walked back to the house turning and waving at my tree which was still and is still waving dancing glad and alone out there, happy to see me it seems to me when I come to the window, as happy when I go, as I walked back to the house I noticed how light my step felt, how natural to stand straight and elegant in the wind. I thought of Leola Welles. Leola, Leola, such a long or such a deep story though I really know nothing at all and I love her so. I can't do her justice now, in writing I mean. I do her justice in my heart, which she washes through in a long wave, as you do, when her name or her



meaning go through my mind. Leola was a wrecked woman working in the office where I worked and where I met Judy, in City Hall in San Francisco. In her fifties I guess and thought to be crazy by the all and sundry, and by me. I don't know if Judy, who loved her too and better than I, would call it that. She was crazy, if crazy is a very obvious and hence dysfunctional alternate pattern of adjustment. Leola was a walking wounded see-er. Her eyes brown small exhausted, and cautious in their swaddling of ruined flesh, the heavy makeup always just askew the mark, were beautiful. I can see them against the inside of my eyelids now, some of the most beautiful eyes I've ever seen. Leola as I would have said when I was a college freshman Leola KNEW. But she wasn't so sure she knew had no access to or outlet for her power. She was skewed like her makeup like the incredible 1930's clothes she wore, beautiful clothes, a rip here, a shiny spot there, there an unpulled zipper, the thick soled high heeled shoes two years before they came back, the original article she walked on in her curious stopped lurching stride: I used to love nice clothes, she said to me the eyes catching me just for a minute before I eased away.

Leola tried to talk to me at first; she felt my power I think and knew I felt hers, but she soon gave up when she saw I was too afraid to try: too afraid of her craziness, her oddity, her need. Before we gave up to simple friendliness, which was something I guess, a comfort for her, a privilege for me, before that she told me how she had spent ten years of her life looking for answers in every mystical system she could find a book about in the Metaphysical Town Hall Bookstore. I feel rather ashamed of it now she said with that little sideways flash slow flash of painful seeing that always made me turn away as though she were a gorgon damn me damn me damn me.

Did you see a number of years ago a collection of photographs made in San Francisco, in North Beach, called I am a Lover? It was kind of a crummy product, really – the photographs were visually very energetic but technically many of them were just inexcusable; and what the photographer had done to kind of beef up the collection into something that seemed heavier and more respectable I guess was to get a friend of his who was an English professor or had a Bartlett's or something to look at them and think up "quotes" for each one. The practice of getting off on quoting pithily has unfortunate consequences sometimes I think – quotes overtake context. I still remember some of the photographs, and I still remember some of the quotes, though not their connections. And the title quotation has hung in my mind for years. "I am a lover who has not found his thing to love." – I've thought it of myself and it's true enough. But I've found a lot of things if not *the* thing. And if you are right about my astrological chart or rather if my chart is right about me, maybe I'll find the thing after all, in the form of a person rather than in the form of a continuing work as I've thought for a while. I've been thinking about that partnership thing quite a bit, but this isn't the time to talk about it. Leola is a lover who never found her thing to love. How beautiful she must have been as a young woman, how beautiful she still was in her wreckage.

wrong. When I leaned close I saw that it was a dead bee on its back impaled on teaselspear; and there was a lean green spider pale as death hunched over her body, feeding on her abdomen. I felt the crunching I couldn't hear. But the bee was quite dead, there was no sense of pain which is the soft spot in my head that's never grown over, the perception of pain. (Ah. I used to be terrified of that vulnerable skinned over space in an infant skull. When I was small I heard some horrible story, I think it was even a sick joke, that involved someone pushing their thumb through that little drumskin, pulling it out dripping with brains; at five or six I was afraid to hold babies, afraid that a mad impulse would take my thumb and me to hell.

I thought to stop for awhile and did but then was looking over what I'd written last night and today before putting it away, and ran up against the part about the soft spot in the baby's head. I saw the crack there, saw how I'd tried to say it but flinched away as soon as I could as from a slimy thing in the dark. You aren't with me Anne I must force my way into my own cracks. I felt you helping me, helping me say all right imagine that imagine that when your clandestine thumb slides across the silken skull and pauses what do you feel the pulse in my thumb, the pulse in the baby's brain, now what do you do I pause I pause I pause she isn't looking mother the baby's mother or my mother isn't looking Our mother? I don't know whose mother, I don't know whose pulse, the baby is innocent as a plant cooling as a plant rustles in breeze. It is time it is time this is the only safe time and place to do it here in the sink of my mind here my thumb on the space bar there my thumb there the sneaking sliding thumb sliding sideways and now pushed. Doesn't the baby scream. I guess it should but I don't hear it just stops sounding and moving as suddenly as if switched. I pull my thumb up it catches a little on the edge of the little ice hole up with its cruel eskimoload of dripping brain. Everything is neutralised and silent the mother me and the still baby with the hole in its head in my arms. Now what to do. Now I don't know I feel still and drained I sit and hold the baby and feel the air cold on my thumb. I don't know what to do. When I started writing I can't type fast enough my mind was flashing ahead of what I could write down; what do you do now, now I kill myself. But now the typewriter and I have caught up I don't know what to do. I've already done that. I'm alone and still with the baby. The mother is gone. Now the baby is going to feel the empty air pressing on the insides of my mechanically typing arms. I am alone.

I've rested a little now, laid my head on my arms and tried to breathe. I feel a little bit frightened, I wish I had a hand to hold. My hands hold each other for a moment and that is very good. I remember the shape of your hands holding mine, I remember Judy's hand curving up to touch my face as unpossessively as willow leaves when once half crazy with love I couldn't express for her I leaned to kiss her wrist one day in City Hall. Another muted gesture, a kiss for the safe extremes of the body. Ah I feel better.

I have sort of adjusted to my shit-fantasies, they seem quite normal now. Will baby-braining in time? It doesn't yet even if some part of me knows I'm my own baby. In several senses.

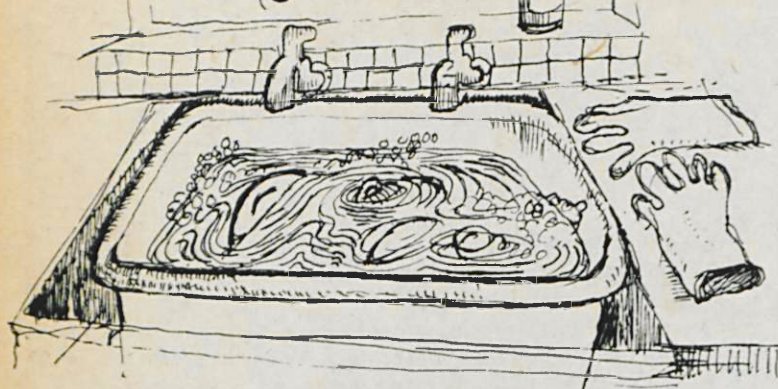
August 18th

There's just one other stray thought that's bouncing around in my head and want to be sure and tell you before I leave this because it's really nice. Feeling so close and easy and rhythmic, incredibly rhythmic together once with Judy I told her she showed me why I'm a lesbian. I think she thought it was just a nice thing to say and I admit I thought it would be rather charming. But it was also perfectly true, I was astonished to learn it myself. But what I'm thinking about right now is that I've unexpectedly begun to dance which I've never done even alone until this summer and then only for a moment before I'd feel silly and stop. Now the music moves me irresistibly as I move around the house and I begin to think of leaving as much of it open as I can for dancing.



I've been seeing more death on my walks. Yesterday morning I glanced appreciatively at a young teasel in an alley and a blotch of dark and gold caught my eye; I felt it was a bee but it was still and

Aug. 20th



Anne,

It's four in the morning, I'm in my parents' house. Mother seemed so mellow and happier than I'd seen her in several years since way before her operation. Yesterday, today, fine. Tonight I asked her when we were alone for a minute upstairs — though we'd been completely alone for several hours earlier it just came to me then as we were cleaning up the kitchen — I asked her if there was anything she wanted to ask me about . . . Sometimes I wish I couldn't read. I get so many ideas from what I read. I read in MS about a gay woman asking her mother that. I thought it was nice.

Actually it did go well for quite a while. We talked, she talked mostly, I responded, I cried a little and so did she.

Daddy came up. He would rather not have talked. He was right. Because it went bad. For a while when I went to bed I tried to think where the place was when it went bad and couldn't quite but I think it was when I said something about I thought or felt Karen had even more feelings of disgust about homosexuals than they did and mother said she did too and we talked about that a little but then it went off more on Karen being upset because I'd upset Mom and Daddy and then mother was saying she felt bitter and always would because I'd turned my back on them, hadn't written when Daddy was so sick, told them I was queer — she didn't use that word — right before Christmas.

I've held myself away, held away, I tried to tell mama, held myself away for years trying to hold myself together. But now trying to let myself go close seems to go so bad. I let myself hope and care and I fall and make a fool of myself and make things worse. I think it was better holding myself with at least some dignity and autonomy.

Oh Anne I try to think of the things you told me, I try to catch the sound of words that will sing in my ear for a minute and help me turn. I think about how you told me about being discreet, about being my own true lover, a whole person, and my hurt heart turns toward that thought like a sunflower.

I think about my bumbling of this visit as I think of my bumbling of that one . . . oh if I could just hold myself close and calm, not want, reach, try. Please help me. No. I'm trying. There's always more than I can say.

I'm glad I met you, I love you so much and I've learned so much and found such new ways in the fissure of your power found in me. But still, I was calm in my solitude, my stomach didn't hurt, I was resigned to my alienation from my family, was willing to wait, able to study and work at my job. Now I'm scared and fragmented. My power isn't steady but runs in bursts too strong for anything but euphoria and verse then incapacitating depression. I'm scared I won't be able to handle school. I'm already having trouble with anything that requires creative energy on my job.

Morning. I will be OK. It will be OK.

This morning I didn't need to show with not subtle signs my difficult night, I could be as warm as I could and not punish. (When I was in college I used to sometimes rub mascara under my eyes to look as though I'd had less sleep than even I had, and perhaps tears. So sad, she's such a sensitive person, and so sincere. Picking the nose is a lot better than that).

Sept 15th

Dear Penny,

Your writing is wonderful — I enjoyed every word of it — Eugene immediately present although I was at York at a film distributor's conference reading it.

Re your "romantic fantasy" in regard to me — like many other subjects you cover you seem to be self-disciplining, self-analysing. That's the way we want to go. After a while you can hold up your own mirrors . . .

Babyshit-Cancer dream and analysis — both fantastic.

"I am a lover who has not found his thing to love" — try saying this phrase over several times in different voices. Do any of the voices work? What is the mode of the voice that works? Who might speak that way? In what movie? I think it goes with the self-induced dark circles under the eyes. The-poor-sensitive-creature-number.

Please send me one of the pictures of you that you like. I like the one of me a lot — need to send a photo to the Knokke Film Fest. for publicity — think I will use it. It may be the way I am remembered for the rest of my life.

Dance, yes. And sing. An exercise. Put on a record that includes several instruments. Pretend to be playing each one in turn. Get into it. Allow yourself to be ridiculous and funny. Do part of this exercise in front of a mirror or a big window that reflects your image.

When are you going to start writing on the list I gave you? Are you going to begin with "list practices, beliefs, systems you've been into . . . ?" I am eager to see some of this.

Awareness of self-pity. Now let go of it. Replacement, gratitude and praise. You already practice this through your morning walks, through your connection with the natural world — always a vehicle for you to contact your center, the center of all-that-is. The healing procession of the seasons. BUT NOW . . . time to concentrate your attention on, quite simply, all that you have to be grateful for.

Morning exercise: upon awakening, for one week. A hymn of praise and gratitude to it or them or however you name that ineffable something. Give it all you've got. Allow yourself to be filled with joy at the wonder of your gifts. Let them know you are aware and thankful.

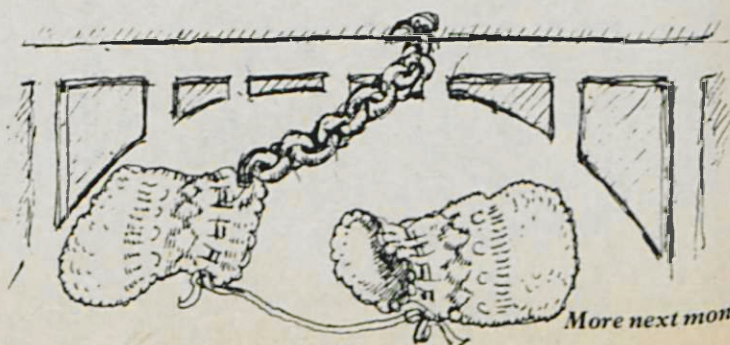
It is always an exercise in trust between us.

That's all the work. My response to your work in order. I have to assume that you have a copy and-or total recall. I hope this by-mail will work. I will save all your papers and eventually get them back to you.

News: I feel pretty good. One bad day after I visited my former-home here in the country and made some kind of emotional break with that life and self. I guess I wasn't able to do it when I left here in June. I came back to Peter's flat in London where I am going to live for a couple of months. The cats had peed on the couch in the front room which made me sob for some time.

I believe surface takes about 10 days, but erratic. Use surface and I'll come back by air since I won't be mailing as much weight. It will move along at an adequate pace. If you have a backlog just send on as it's ready and I will catch up — I think it will be ok.

xxxxx,
Anne



More next month

Spare Ribs

If you are an engineering staff worker

JOIN TASS

The staff section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers

If you oppose sex discrimination in jobs, in pay, in opportunity

JOIN TASS

Don't let the employers organise you out of equal pay
and equal opportunities. Legislation will not be enough.

YOU NEED ORGANISATION NEGOTIATION

As well as legislation.

Write for application, or organise a meeting.

Contact: Judith Hunt, National Womens Officer, Amalgamated Union of
Engineering Workers, Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section,
Onslow Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey.



complete your set of RIBS

No.5 - Family Everafter -
Micheline Wandor on the family
structure ...

No.6 - What the Revolution has
done for women in Cuba ...
Epidurals ...

No.8 - John Berger's unpublished
notes for G... Abortion, all the
facts ...

No.10 - Tanya, the only woman
who fought with Che Guevara ...
Bisexuality ...

No.11 - Equal Pay, what the
Hell's going on? ... How we
rolled the Stones ...

No.12 - Sylvia Plath, unknown
short story ... 'Woman and
Madness' ...

No.14 - Are children loved
enough, too little or too much -
maternal deprivation reassessed ...

No.18 - How the female religion
was stamped out ... Choosing
the right analyst ... sex shops ...

No.19 - 'Down Among The
Women' Fay Weldon's novel ...
Vaginal Politics ...

No.20 - List of Women's Centres
... film about women's vaginas
... Illiteracy - whose problem?

No.24 Non-sexist kids books ...
Wedlocked women ... pre-
menstrual tension ...

No.26 - History of the Housewife
... Being a woman doctor ...
Women militants in 'Portuguese'
Africa ...

No.27 - Mountain Women Blues
... Working Women's Charter ...
Schizophrenia ...

No.28 - Why women starve
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Women workers ... Sex and self
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SHORTLIST

Compiled by Jill Nicholls. Please send any information to Shortlist, *Spare Rib*, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS.

events

Sappho Forum

A one-day symposium on homosexuality for people in the healing and helping professions. Workshops on the problems of homosexual women and men working in these areas; the current attitude to homosexuality of the medical establishment; ways of disseminating factual information about homosexuality within these professions; coming out and job risk.

At the Africa Centre, 38 King Street, London WC2. On April 26, 10.30-5.30. Accommodation available for Friday and Saturday nights (book in advance).

Registration, lunch, disco £1.50 inclusive. Please write, with sae, to Sappho, BCM/PETREL, London WC1V 6XX.

Nursery Staff Action Group

A one-day workshop to encourage the growing interest in daycare and consider the issues facing workers in day nurseries. There will be a creche and the workers will be paid. At the Ecumenical Centre, Denbigh Road, London W11. On April 26, 10.30-5.30.

International Women's Year
Wandsworth Women's Liberation group, together with the Battersea Art Centre, is holding a public meeting on May 2, 7.30-10pm at Battersea Art Centre (old Town Hall), Lavender Hill, London SW11 (01-223 5356). The subject: "International Women's Year - is there anything to celebrate?", with Joan Lestor MP, Tess Gill, co-author of *Women's Rights*, and songs from Frankie Armstrong.

Childcare Campaign

The first national conference is at the Albert Hall Institute, Nottingham, on May 10. Details from Nottingham Women's Liberation, 26 Newcastle Chambers, Angel Row, Nottingham.

Working Women's Charter
Campaign conference for the London region on May 17 and 18 at City University. For all groups active on the Charter. Creche provided. Contact the Secretary, Coordinating Committee, London WC, 49 Lowther Hill, SE23.

TUC March

The TUC is arranging a march for International Women's Year. It's on May 25, moving off from Hyde Park Corner at 1.30 and meeting in Trafalgar Square at 3.00.

services

Pregnancy Advisory Service

Has had to start charging a fee. They say "The first demand on our funds must be to give financial help to women in need of an abortion. We have costed our pregnancy testing services and calculated that a charge of £1 per test will cover our expenses. Re-tests will be free of charge".

Gay Switchboard

Run by volunteers who can give information, refer to counselling organisations etc. Open on 01-837 7324 from 2pm-11pm Monday to Thursday, with all-night coverage at weekends.

"With Us In Mind"

A kit for schools on mental health, mental handicap and mental illness produced by Community Service Volunteers and MIND (National Association for Mental Health). Includes information, project, action and resource sheets, plus foldout charts. Cost £3.30 plus 40p postage and packing from CVS, 237 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NG or MIND, 22 Harley Street, London W1N 2ED.

Women's Work Register

A connecting service whereby women who want jobs done by women can phone and be put in touch with a woman who can do the job. So far a variety of skills have registered - carpet layers, plumbers, drivers, dogwalkers - but it needs more. It also needs women to use it - to get jobs done or activities organised. So phone 01-836 6081 (yes, the Women's Liberation Workshop) and ask for the work register.

arts

American Coverlets

"If the important events and emotions of human life can be incorporated into patchwork bedspreads what happens to all our high-flying ideas about Great Art and its Important Values as opposed to low art and its merely decorative and utilitarian

purposes?" (*Spare Rib* 26 - *Patchwork*).

An exhibition loaned from the John Judkyn Memorial, Bath will be at the Guildhall, Boston, May 6-30, and at Folkestone Public Library June 7-28.

"800 Years of Glasgow"

This exhibition includes a section on the suffragette movement and the ILP in Glasgow (see *Spare Rib* 32 - 'Jessie'). At the Art Gallery, Kelvingrove, Glasgow 3 (041-334 1134) in May.



Coverlet, 72" by 72". Quilted by a group of Mormons in the village of Waimea, Hawaii. The blue and white applique pattern is called 'Poni-mo'i', which means carnation. It is one of the most popular flowers for leis, the flower festival.

"Woman's Work"

An exhibition to contrast female stereotypes presented by the media with the ways in which women see themselves and their position. Planned for June. It's hoped to include adverts, videotapes, photos, kids' paintings and original work by women artists. Anyone interested in women as the subject of art please contact Bonny Laydon and Deborah Howarth, School of English and American Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich, Norfolk. They can't afford to pay fees, but will collect and deliver work in the London/Norwich/Cambridge area.

corrections

To our New Year's honours list: **Bookshops**

Liverpool: Atticus Bookshop, 38 Clarence Street, Liverpool 3 was missed out.

Redruth: Books and Things no longer exists.

Publications

Add Race Today (01-737 2268) - it's also a newsdesk.

films

Australian Independent Film and Video

A festival at the Collegiate Theatre, Gordon Street, London WC1 on April 25-27, 11am-11pm. Day 1: history of alternative films in Australia. Day 2: experimental, personal and structural films. Day 3: documentary and community film and video. Some films by and some about women. Festival ticket £1, day ticket 50p.

Women and Revolution in Vietnam

A half-hour slide-show with commentary about the continuing struggle of Vietnamese women against the double oppression of imperialism and sexism, and how it relates to our own struggle. Available for rent at £3, £10 plus travelling expenses if a speaker comes from the group. Contact the Women in Indo-China group, 49 Florence Road, London N4 (01-272 7043).

courses

Women's Studies

Another course run by Jill Liddington at the Adult Education Dept, Abraham Moss Centre, Crescent Road, Manchester (061-740 1491). It will last for 12 weeks starting on April 10, on Thursdays 7-9pm.

Week 1 - open session

Week 2-4 - women in local history

Week 5-8 - women in China, Cuba, America

Week 9-12 - women and film

Battered Wives' Rights

A weekly class run by the Greenwich Institute and Greenwich Women's Aid at Charlton House, London SE7. Starts April 21 at 7.30pm. Cost 75p for six weeks (reductions for SS). Contact 01-856 6496.

pamphlets

Battered Women: how to use the law

Tess Gill and Anna Coote
NCCL Publication, 23pp, 30p
Puts the problem properly in perspective as one which society has only recently deigned to recognise by its opening: "The custom of wife-beating is as old as marriage itself, and men were beating women long before that". Its aim is to sketch out the legal remedies for both married women (divorce and separation procedure, from initial injunction application to rights in the family home) and single women (getting an injunction by claiming damages in the County Court, and general comments on tenancy rights).

The authors stress that the procedure for married women is complex and would be difficult without a solicitor. But they set out clearly the procedure for single women to follow to get their injunction, including model Particulars of Claim, Injunction

and Affidavit, so that they can do it themselves.

There is also a section on how the law can be improved, particularly regarding the roles of the police, magistrate courts, judges and Neighbourhood Law Centres (most of which won't help battered women) - and of course more Women's Aid Centres. But the choice of solicitor is crucial too, since a procrastinating, unsympathetic or ill-informed one can needlessly prolong a woman's misery for months.

Eileen Meredith

Women of the Revolution

Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea
"The Portuguese troops, when they arrive in a village, steal chickens, pigs and cattle from the people. The guerillas never take anything from the people. When the Portuguese soldiers find girls on the road they violate them. In FRELIMO we women are very much respected - and this impresses our sisters who come from the enemy zone, as I did. We are accustomed to something quite different. Under the colonialists, when a man in uniform appeared, it usually meant ill-treatment. We are so surprised at first when we see the guerillas treating us as sisters, not as objects of pleasure" - Maria Njanje, FRELIMO student

Women struggle to free themselves from the colonial system and from tribal tradition. Other pamphlets about specific aspects of the liberation struggle are *Labour: Forced or Free?* and *Health Under Attack*.

Cost 15p each from CFMAG, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London WC2.

Growing Up Homosexual

Birmingham Gay Education Group

The purpose of this pamphlet is to explain to young people what it is to be homosexual, and how

and why homosexuals suffer discrimination and prejudice in this society. It tries to show young people how to feel happy about their homosexuality, rather than ashamed or guilty, and how to have good relationships with people of their own sex.

In very simple language it argues against marriage, against conventional images of homosexuals (eg in films such as *The Killing of Sister George* and *Villain*), and for masturbation. It explains the physical aspects of sex - how to do it. "Unlike other sex education books, we've no need to tell homosexual people what their lovers' sex organs will be like; they will be

like their own."

Copies at 10p each (or 7p each for orders of 15 or more) from the Gay Education Group, c/o The Peace Centre, 18 Moor Street, Ringway, Birmingham 4.

Sink Songs

Dinah Brooke and Michelene Wandor
Playbooks 1, 70pp, 45p
Includes *To Die Among Friends* (first performed by Paradise Foundry) and two very short, funny and violent pieces by Dinah Brooke - *Love Food* and *That's My Boy*. Available from Dinah Brooke, 16 Gloucester Crescent, NW1, or Michelene Wandor, 71 Belsize Lane, NW3.



The Socialised Penis

Jack Lietewka
A Rising Free Reprint, 10pp, 5p
Jack Lietewka did not have an erection on three separate occasions 1970-71, when he was with women he liked, who liked him, and with all signals apparently set at a go on both sides. In this short pamphlet he attempts to account for these apparently isolated events. He traces the problem to the fact that his penis was "socialised" to respond to women only in terms of "objectification, fixation and conquest". It therefore "failed him" in situations that lacked these trappings of lust and seduction. A woman friend interpreted the same data rather differently, suggesting that Lietewka had, to a certain extent, liberated himself, but was not capable of treating women as sexual equals, and rejected them totally rather than give up "the last bastion of male supremacy".

The Socialised Penis comes over

as an honest piece of self-criticism, aimed at male rather than female readers. His account of male sexual initiation is specific to the US, but could still provide a useful basis for discussion in this country. He doesn't offer easy solutions, rightly recognising that the process of socialisation is not easily reversed.

Available from Rising Free, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1.

Christopher Roper

Also available from Rising Free: How to organise a Multi-Service Women's Center

Carol Shapiro, Women's Action Alliance, New York; 66p
Tyranny of Tyranny
Cathy Levine, 3p (an anarchist critique of the paper *Tyranny of Structurelessness*).

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REVIEWS

Ursula Le Guin Science Fiction

Science fiction deals with possible worlds, either alien planets or the future Earth. The freedom allowed by imagined worlds creates a boundless potential for political comment. An imagined future can be used either as an analogy with present society (1984) or as an alternative.

However, most science fiction writers fail to use this potential, as they tend to concentrate on the obvious external characteristics of their 'new worlds', but people these worlds with characters taken from the worst type of romantic fiction; clever male scientists and their female assistants being the most popular choices. This criticism cannot be made of Ursula Le Guin, who realises that different worlds mean different people.

Her stories are set in a future in which worlds have been destroyed by the abuse of natural resources, by greed, by capitalism run wild. She depicts alternative societies on other planets. Her latest novel, *The Dispossessed*, is about two planets, Urras, the world of capitalism and the profit motive, and Anarres, a previously uninhabited planet colonised six hundred years before by a group of anarchists who, revolting against the life of Urras, decided to leave and found a new socialist society elsewhere. The central character is Shevek, an Anarrestian physicist, who has discovered a principle (about space and time) that he feels should be shared with the peoples of all other planets. His theories are suppressed on Anarres by those who are fearful of any links with the 'evil' of the past, i.e. life on Urras, and see such links as potentially dangerous to their own society. He manages to get to Urras, where he hopes that his discoveries will be accepted 'freely' and shared by everyone. The book is made up of alternate chapters. Shevek's time on Urras, his gradual perception of the misery and exploitation hidden beneath its beauty, and his realisation of how he too is being exploited, is contrasted with flashbacks to his life on Anarres and the conflict between his belief in, and his oppression by, its communistic way of life.

The exile in a foreign land is a common figure in all Ursula Le Guin's novels, used by her to offer comparisons and alternatives, to question what is considered 'normal'. What is accepted as absolute by one society is seen differently through the perception of a stranger. Shevek, who has lived in a world where life is a matter of continual struggle against an unyielding nature, where there is no such thing as excess, for the first time comes across taps that can be left running, clothes that are discarded after being worn once. He is amazed by the trees, the birds, the animals on Urras, for Anarres is a barren wasteland of dust, with little natural vegetation and its only animals the colonisers.

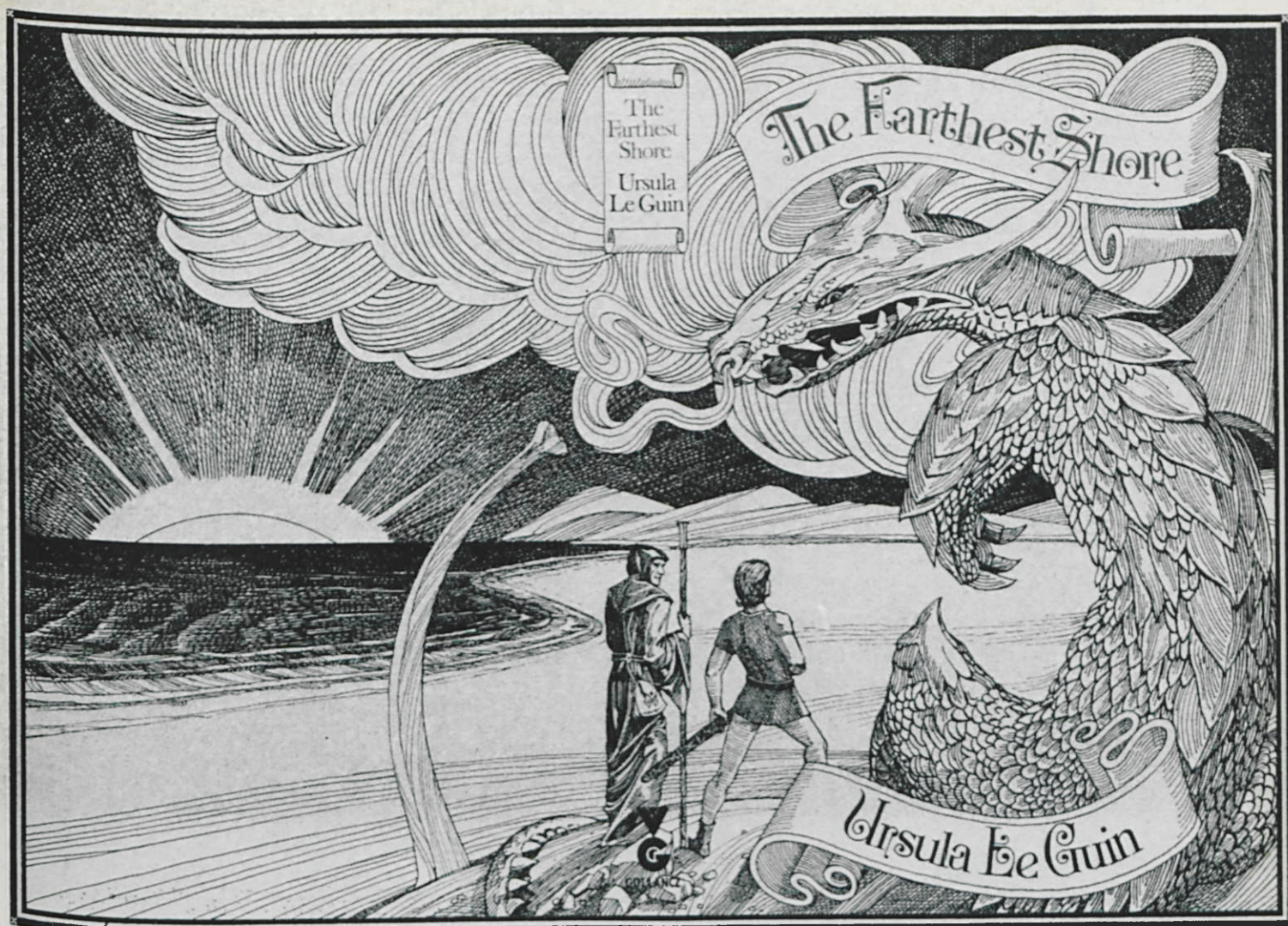
The figure of the exile is used by Ursula Le Guin as a method for exploring different modes of sexuality; the common conception of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', universally the most 'absolute' of all ideologies, is thus questioned. In *The Dispossessed*, Shevek is confronted on

Urras by the most extreme form of sexual alienation, women are commodities and nothing else. He is made constantly aware of the differences between this world and his world, where women and men are equals, where childcare and housework are completely socialised, where there is no word for rape. On Urras the women sell themselves either into prostitution or into 'monogamous' marriage. As the free expression of sexuality is repressed, so there is a general atmosphere of pervasive, perverse eroticism. The women, called by the Anarrestians "body-profiteers", publicly flaunt their oiled and naked bodies. Even the furniture, with its "smoothness and delicacy of surfaces", is disturbingly erotic. To Shevek sex is something mutually desired between two people, so when at a party on Urras he tries to make love with a woman who has been flirting with him, he is shocked by her violent rejection of him, just as she is shocked by what she considers to be, on his part, an attempt at rape.



Ursula Le Guin

Genly Ai, the central character in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, is in the same position, only reversed. He comes from a world where the sexes are rigidly differentiated, and is faced on Gethen not merely with equality of the sexes but with the merging of the sexes, with hermaphroditism. As in *The Dispossessed*, the sexual mode of the one world is used to counterpoint that of the other, through the perception of the one figure who knows both. The Gethenians have a sexual cycle, coming into "kemmer" for five or six days every few weeks, and at that time they become either masculine or feminine. Everyone has the chance to bear children, so there is no division of labour around reproduction and childcare. While they are in "kemmer" they do not work and their whole time is given over to sexual activity, while the rest of the time they are almost 'sexless'. Genly Ai, forced to view them as males because they are not sexually available to him (and thus cannot be classified as females), distrusts them because of the streaks of 'femininity' they show. His accepted view of 'male' and 'female' is undermined. They ask him to describe 'women', and he finds he cannot except in terms of inferiority, which the Gethenians do not understand. He is a freak on Gethen, a sexual 'pervert', something almost obscene, but by the end his consciousness has changed to such an extent that he can hardly recognise his own fellow creatures as humans. When they step off the spaceship he sees "a troupe of



great, strange animals, of two different species; great apes with intelligent eyes, all of them in rut, in kemmer...

Ursula Le Guin has touched on what is so lacking in most of contemporary science fiction, the dialectics between modes of production, sexuality and consciousness. That is, when advanced technology really does eliminate the sexual division of labour, the relations between the sexes must change, and therefore individuals' perceptions of themselves. Shevek, when challenged with the physical differences between sexes in terms of strength, replies, "but what does that matter when we have machines?" He fails to understand phrases like "loss of femininity" and "masculine self-respect". In the same way, as work is collective on Anarres, and everyone does manual work as well as other work, people do not see themselves and others in terms of status. Shevek does not understand the strange behaviour of the man who comes into his room on Urras, and bows to him and waits submissively for him to speak: he is a servant. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Genly Ai is trapped in his perception of people as male and female; continually mistrustful, he finds it difficult to relate to them at all.

However, the ideas that Ursula Le Guin explores, particularly those about sexuality, seem never to be taken far enough. She is limited on the one hand by the very way in which she portrays her theories of consciousness, her use of the single central figure, and on the other hand, and conjoined with this, limited by the central philosophy underlying all her works, an almost mystical belief in bal-

ance. Balance can be seen in terms of relative perception: the wall on Anarres that shuts off the landing bay for foreign trading spacecraft, and beyond which no Anarrestian goes, from one side implies imprisonment, and from the other, freedom. The title of *The Left Hand of Darkness* comes from a poem the first line of which reads "Light is the left hand of darkness". Everything has its opposite, light and darkness, hot and cold, male and female, and it is only with the conjunction of the dualities that 'wholeness', the 'true perception' can be achieved. This approach can, however, be limiting, as in the case of her explorations of sexuality, for the opposites in themselves are unchallenged. The Gethenians, although hermaphrodites, are either 'masculine' or 'feminine' in the most important aspect of their lives, that is, their sexuality. The norm remains a heterosexual one, despite the fact that at all other times there are no sexual differences.

The issues that are raised become subordinate to the 'balanced view', and because of the powerful position of the central character they become merely the means towards his acquiring self-knowledge. It is odd, too, that with her interest in sexual politics the central character is always male: the women are strong, but supportive. Even the fact that Odo, the founder of the colony on Anarres and the creator of their socialist philosophy, is a woman, appears to be no more than a token gesture. She could just as well have been a man. There is even a certain coyness in the descriptions of sex between two people: there are no actual physical descriptions, merely romantic

evocations of water rushing down mountains, or the wind in the trees. As for relationships, the most 'realistic', and therefore the most successful in Ursula Le Guin's terms, is that between Genly Ai and Estraven. And of course, in that one, sex is never consummated, for although Estraven is hermaphroditic, and even comes into "kemmer" as a female when alone with Genly Ai, he remains for Ai essentially a man.

In *The Dispossessed*, the social and political differences of Urras and Anarres become the means towards a mystical understanding of the meaning of 'life'. Shevek returns to Anarres, for "as surely as the future becomes the past, the past becomes the future", and "to go is to return". In *The Lathe of Heaven* the main idea is that it is possible for dreams to literally change reality, not just from the moment of the dream, but retroactively. The unfortunate person who has this power, George Orr, has no power over his dreams. He is being treated by a psychiatrist, Haber, who wants to use him to 'better' the world, but in the true Freudian tradition the commands and desires fed into his subconscious are displaced to produce something entirely different. So when he is told to dream about peace and unity on earth, his dream does create a united world, but united only by a war with creatures from outer space. The outcome is brilliantly worked out: by the end there are innumerable different 'realities', the whole world changes day by day, and only two people are aware of it. Orr revolts against his powers, but Haber will not let him stop, as he is determined to find out how he too

can dream "effectively". He is a megalomaniac, and when he finally manages it he can only produce chaos, the void at the end of the world. The title is taken from a quotation by Chuang Tse: "To let understanding stop at what cannot be understood is a high attainment. Those who cannot do it will be destroyed on the lathe of heaven". The individual is part of the total pattern, and because Haber is trying to step outside this he can only produce chaos. Again it is a question of balance, here in terms of power, its use and abuse.

Balance, self-knowledge, perception of the totality, these are the 'messages'. The endings are all somehow disappointing, the political potential, especially in the case of *The Dispossessed* and *The Left Hand of Darkness*, is lost in the mysticism of an individual consciousness. Self-knowledge means loss of self means perceiving the totality: Shevek and Genly Ai are 'sadder and wiser men'.

Yet, again, it is through her use of the central figure that Ursula Le Guin achieves her greatest success - her extraordinarily vivid descriptions of natural scenes. Her heroes are voyagers, not just from planet to planet, but across the planets themselves, and it is through their eyes we see the land. Alone, they are vulnerable and weak in the face of nature's harshness: Falk, in *City of Illusions*, faced with the hostility even of the animals in his journey through the unknown forests, and, most memorable of all, Genly Ai and Estraven journeying across the ice-cap in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and the horror of the "blind nothingness" of a world without shadow. ▶

BOOKS

Ursula Le Guin is a self-professed admirer of Virginia Woolf, and as such has chosen to portray a world as reflected through the subjective experience of the individual. She is successful in that she achieves the 'realism' most science fiction strives towards, and makes fantastic worlds credible through the credibility of those experiencing them. Yet perhaps the point is that science fiction, with its freedom of subject matter, does not need 'realism' of this kind, and that although Ursula Le Guin does it successfully, she is trapped by it, by the creation of her 'realistic' characters. Her explorations of sexuality can never be as radical as Monique Wittig's, a French writer who goes so far as to change the structure of language in order to write a feminist book (in one of her books the gender of all the nouns is changed to the feminine form). However, it is unfair to compare Ursula Le Guin with Monique Wittig, except in that they are both interested in questioning accepted forms of sexual behaviour and sexual consciousness. For Ursula Le Guin is essentially a romantic novelist, and as such follows the tradition of creating characters to be identified with. She does it well, and it is because of this that her novels are "highly readable", but because of this, too, that they never quite fulfil the promise of their ideas.

Sarah Lefanu

Books by Ursula Le Guin:
The Left Hand of Darkness Panther
The Lathe of Heaven Panther
Planet of Exile Panther
Rocannon's World Ace
City of Illusions Panther
The Dispossessed Gollancz

Children's books:
A Wizard of Earthsea Puffin
Tombs of Atuan Puffin
The Farthest Shore Puffin

Daughter of Earth
 by Agnes Smedley
 (Feminist Press from
 Compendium at £1.50)

Agnes Smedley survived. Born of poor sons and daughters of earth in stony, unyielding Missouri, hers was a survival scarred by the "pains and sorrows of the lowly." She lived to chronicle the silent stumblings of poor white workers, her own people, in her autobiographical novel *Daughter of Earth* "What I have written is not a work of beauty, created that someone may spend an hour pleasantly," she writes at the beginning. For there is no nostalgia in her history, no poetry of poverty.

Her writing is a function of her life. "To die would have been beautiful. But I belong to those who do not die for the sake of beauty. I belong to those who die from other causes - exhausted by poverty, victims of wealth and power. Fighters in a great cause. A few of us die, desperate from the pains of disillusionment of love,



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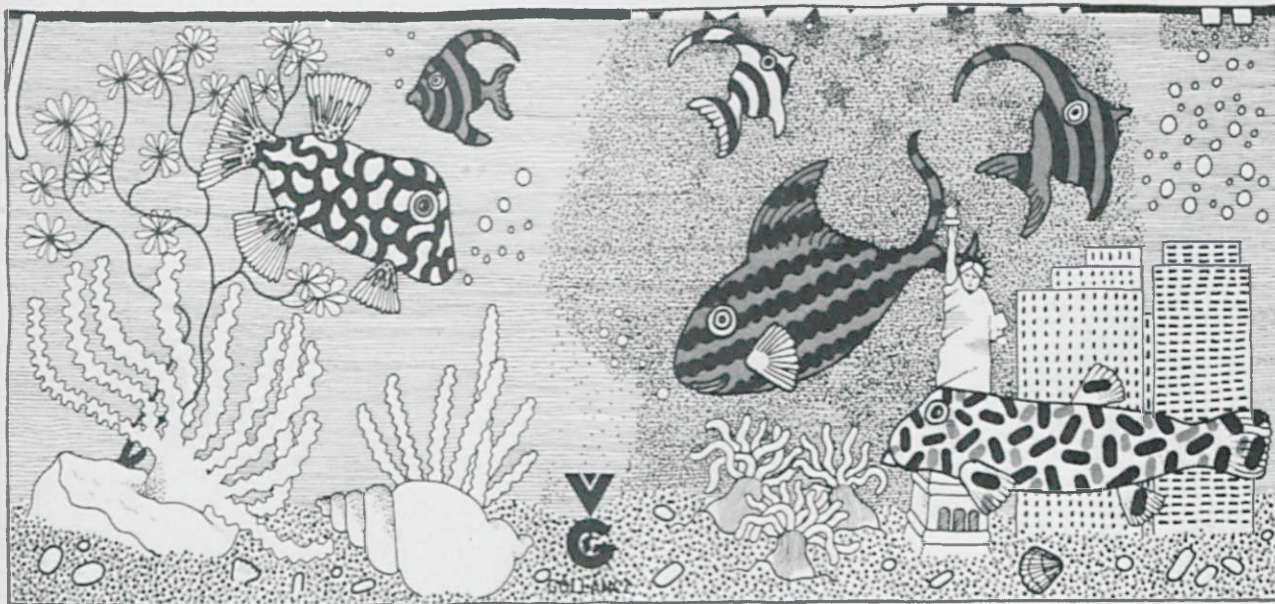
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DINKY
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but ... we are of the earth and our struggle is the struggle of the earth."

This novel is about the depressed, shiftless, defeated experiences of a family dispossessed by hurricanes and company hustlers in America before and after the First World War. It is also testament to the umbilical bond between class and sex.

Always living 'beyond the tracks', the childhood of the central character, Marie, is no fairy story. There is no happy recollection of days that were poor but contented. Her childhood is unsheltered and unprotected - a rough acclimatisation to hard work, ignorant insecurity and the violence, both physical and emotional of her people's experience of sex and class.

Sex is a mystery - the strange, unsettling noise of her parents at night in the bedroom she shares with them.

Power is her father threatening her mother with a knotted rope. It is her father leaving home after women's suffrage is granted because her mother refuses to tell him how she will vote.

Power is the 'company man' ditching her father because of a clause he didn't read in a contract he couldn't understand and could barely sign.

Marie sees only two options for women of her class - depressed and oppressed wifedom and motherhood, or prostitution. And to her the latter seems infinitely preferable since it at least seems to offer some autonomy. You may be bought but you can't be owned.

But Marie has a third option - education. Unlike her parents, her brothers and sisters, she struggles through an elementary education, driven by invincible pride and competitiveness. At least she

can read and write. She can teach in a school, work in an office.

Education puts her on the rough road to Socialist politics. Always conscious of her class, always committed to it, she also manages to escape from it. First the separation breeds contempt. But subsequent encounters with activists in the Hindu people's nationalist movement, and with other Socialists take her to a radical newspaper where she is able to reassert her class affiliations.

In her own life Agnes Smedley went to China where she journeyed with the revolutionary Eight Route Army and wrote of the peasants struggles against the Japanese invasion and the post-war Socialist revolution.

Writing despatches from the Eighth Route Army's travels in 1937 she remembers her own childhood as a poor servant to the rich, and stresses her commitment to the peasants. "To me, it merely means that I cannot live a life apart from them."

The road to conscious class politics in *Daughter of Earth* then is clear, and the book's great strength is its testimony to the felt oppression of the meek and disinherited.

Much murkier, much less conscious, however, is Marie's account of her deeply felt terror of sex.

This has to be seen as a function of her time. Agnes Smedley was writing without the support of a women's movement. She was clearly not informed by the experiences of psychoanalysis, or the sexual politics developed in the European feminist and Socialist movements before they were decapitated by fascism.

Sex in *Daughter of Earth* is omnipresent

but opaque. For Marie sex is a tyranny which leads to "violence marriage or prostitution, and marriage meant children, weeping nagging women and complaining men, it meant unhappiness, and all the things that I feared and dreaded and intended to avoid."

For her sex "had no place in love" and yet "what is love?" she asks. Ashamed, she acknowledges the haunting pursuit of romantic friendship, of love, tenderness and companionship. She meets a man whom she later marries, but she is still haunted. "All the things I longed for combined in him. The fear of sex and children still barred the way."

She wonders, can love be beautiful and free? "Could human beings be tender and still not weak? Could there really be love free from danger and subjection for a woman?"

Sex remains a blank horror story, in which self-hatred and complete sexual ignorance are compounded by the sexism of her encounters. "My fear of sex expression had grown with the years. Yet I resented the virginity and the so-called purity of women... It had always shamed me that men judged women by such a standard."

Thus sex remains a silent and sinister dynamic. "Asceticism gave no rest. Sex gave no rest. There was my public life - a good life. There were Americans who respected me and whom I honoured. "There were the Indians who loved and respected me - unknowing. Why should these two not be enough - why should my body be so tortured, my spirit so heavily burdened?"

In *Daughter of Earth* Agnes Smedley makes her private life public, and yet it

remains the captive of its privacy, of its absence from any context of social struggle. She fought with it alone, uncomprehending, and impotent. And yet she lived as a revolutionary whose 'public' struggles spanned continents. *Daughter of Earth* begins the story of her busy survival.

Beatrix Campbell

Kid's Books

Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack
by M.E. Kerr
(Victor Gollancz £1.50)

Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack is about four middle class American kids and the conflict between them and their parents. The parents are middle class do-gooders who fail to apply their liberal morality either to their own lives or to their children. While the content of these conflicts is middle class, the theme of adolescent-parent conflict is honestly explored, which should make it possible for kids from different class or cultural backgrounds to empathise with the characters.

At the beginning Dinky Hocker appears to be perfectly happy. She's bright, inquisitive about the bizarre and an obsessive eater. But it soon becomes clear that she's stereotyped by her family and peers as the mad fat girl. She only really responds to P. John, a local

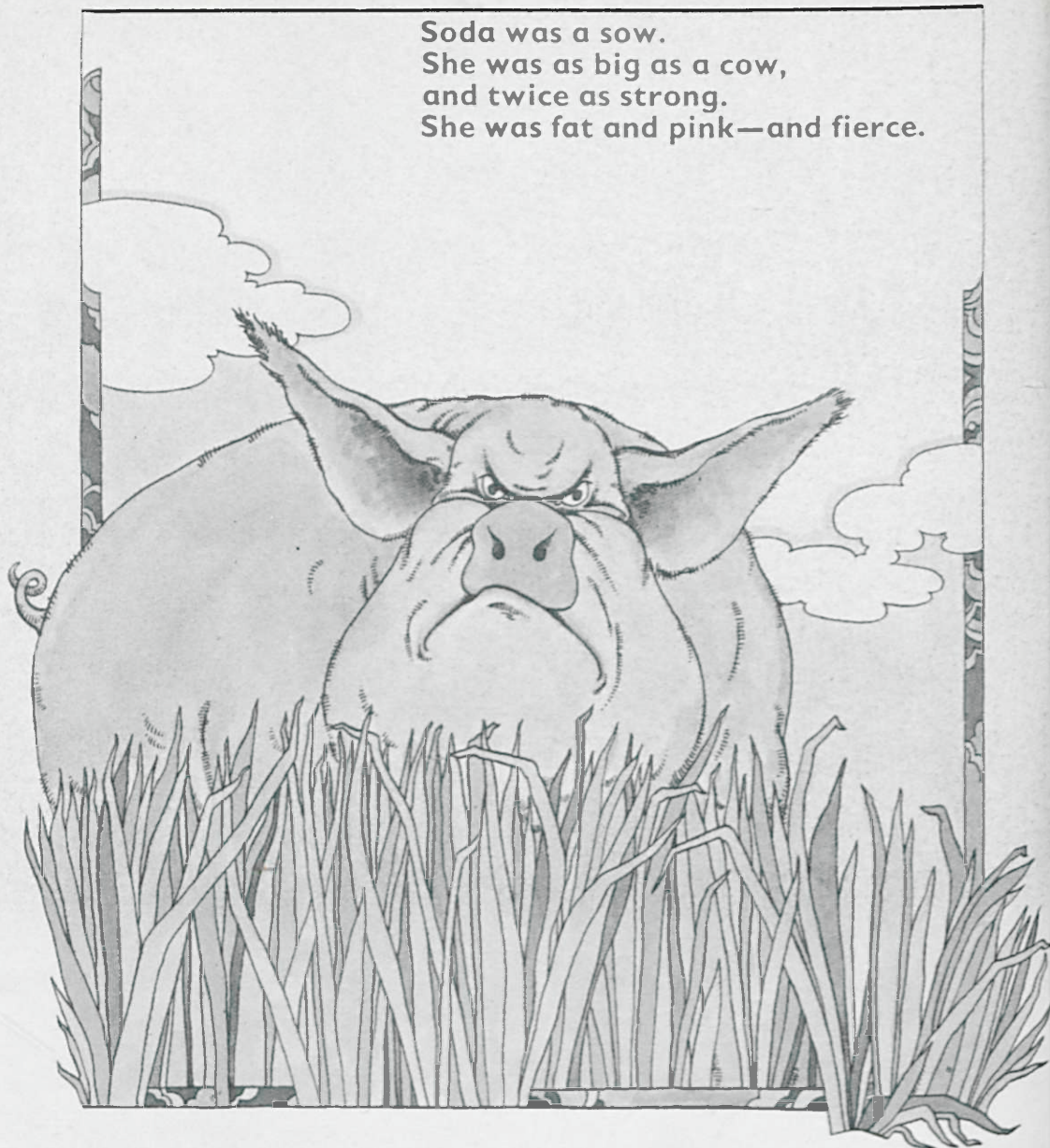
boy, who sees beyond the stereotype. He's particularly critical of Dinky's mum's insensitivity towards her (She's preoccupied with rescuing young heroin (smack) addicts), and as he also has weight and parental problems P. John's feeling towards Dinky is clearly one of empathy rather than patronage. They get on well and help each other and even join weight watchers together, till the parents step in and put paid to the relationship. P. John then leaves home breaks with his family and goes off to boarding school, while Dinky becomes progressively more withdrawn and passive. What comes across very clearly is how much more difficult it is for a young girl to break with her family. However in the end Dinky is vindicated. She asserts herself in a way that is neither unrealistic nor utopian. Her mum is at the town hall for a grand ceremony where she's going to be rewarded for her noble work with drug addicts. Dinky does not appear. The reason only becomes clear when the local notables file out after the ceremony. On every wall between the hall and Dinky's home she has emblazoned "Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack".

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**Soda was a sow.
She was as big as a cow,
and twice as strong.
She was fat and pink—and fierce.**

A Sow Called Soda
by Wendy Wharam
(Abelard-Schuman 50p)

Soda must be the all-time contender for the prize for the most positive heroine ever. She browbeats and bullies her owner Mr. Pooter whenever she doesn't get her own way; chases the local children who dare to cross her field, tips a 'lady' teacher into the trough, and then eats the

postman's letters. Why she's so aggressive is never quite clear - maybe she needs more company than her owner, tiny Mr. Pooter. And he is nothing but an amiable foil to her violent whims; they are almost like an old married couple - Soda playing the nagging, discontented wife, and Mr. Pooter the diminutive browbeaten male. Anyway, it's a powerful and exciting book, even when Soda serenely admires her reflection in the pig trough in her 'borrowed' hat.

This crazy story is an amalgam of two worlds. On the one hand we have a host of 'Happy Family' types from the village who come into Soda's life because she has eaten their letters, demanding their literal pound of flesh, whilst she continues her own unsweet way in a welter of destruction. By the time readers are half way through this book I am sure they will have totally identified with Soda when she chases the butcher's boy up a tree with his basket of pork sausages. "Soda couldn't bear sausages. A cousin of hers had been made into sausage meat only the week before." Well ... how would you feel?

In the end though this story isn't really about a new type of female. It's all about power. And it's power on very masculine terms. Soda continues to show her massive strength, pushing through hedges and toppling trees, until someone has the bright idea of harnessing her energy by offering her employment. Which just goes to show that if you give a female a good hard job of work to keep her busy she will stop being a nuisance, earn her keep, contribute something to the community, and be so tired at the end of the day that nobody will get a peep out of her. And poor Mr. Pooter misses his lost sparring partner. Despite these limitations it's an exciting book for children, with a very readable story and lively illustrations.

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6	Why is your magazine so depressing?	Scott, Ann	Usage Terms: © Ann Scott. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
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16	Is Weinstock a Male Chauvinist Pig?	Rowe, Marsha	Usage Terms: © Marsha Rowe
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18	Crisis at Fakenham workers co-operative	Haw, Cathy	Usage Terms: © Catherine Haw
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20	Adele Faccio at the National Abortion Conference in Rome, Jan 1975	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
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30	a manual washing machine of about 1857		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for a manual washing machine of about 1857. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.

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31	A zorst bellows action vacuum cleaner of about 1850		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for A zorst bellows action vacuum cleaner of about 1850. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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32	naked woman holding plane, with doll and ball; July 23rd		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for naked woman holding plane, with doll and ball; July 23rd. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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33	woman's face		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for woman's face. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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39	African Woman holding pamphlet		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for African Woman holding pamphlet. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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39	The socialised penis	Roper, Christopher	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The socialised penis. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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